Nonito Donaire • Mares-Agbeko Preview • Timothy Bradley

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RINGSIDE
by Nigel Collins

Room At The Top

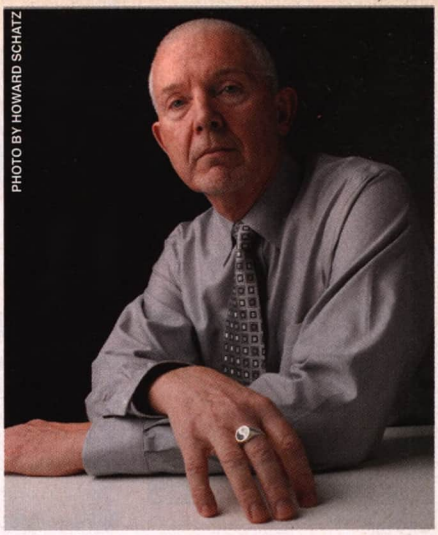
PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHATZ

The fact that there are currently six RING world champions and 11 vacancies is not the best of situations. It is, however, the price we have had to pay in order to maintain THE RING belt's integrity.

Occasionally, we have been tempted to bend the rules in order to fill a vacancy, especially when it would have been a popular decision with many fans. But THE RING has stood firm and stuck to a patient, conservative approach. As a result, what we lacked in quantity we've more than made up for in quality.

The six reigning RING champions—Wladimir Klitschko, Jean Pascal, Sergio Martinez, Juan Manuel Marquez, Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, Giovani Segura—are all outstanding fighters, many of them potential Hall of Famers. Few would debate the legitimacy of their claims, but that doesn't mean I'm satisfied with the status quo.

A RING magazine world champion in every weight class is still the ultimate goal, and, with a little bit of luck, I see opportunities to make significant strides in that direction during the coming months.

Immediately after he splattered Fernando Montiel, Nonito Donaire told RingTV.com's Mike Rosenthal he wanted to win THE RING belt. Then, early the following week, Donaire's wife, Rachael, called THE RING editorial office and reinforced how much her husband wanted to fill our bantamweight vacancy.

I explained that, as the new number-one contender at 118 pounds, Nonito had to be involved in any fight for the vacant title and that he would have to fight the number-two contender, whoever that happened to be when the fight took place.

As things stand right now, that would be Anselmo Moreno, who has already voiced his willingness to fight Donaire and indefinitely postponed his defense against Lorenzo Parra in order to be available. You also have to factor in the winner of Showtime's bantamweight tournament between Abner Mares and Jospeh Agbeko on April 26. A brilliant performance by either man could possible change the equation.

Another vacancy that appears to have reasonable chance of being filled in 2011 is junior welterweight. Even before Timothy Bradley beat Devon Alexander, there was talk of a fight between the winner and Amir Khan. True, the Brit has to get past Paul McCloskey first. But if he does, Bradley, currently THE RING's number-one contender, fighting Khan, who is number two, would create a legitimate champion.

Showtime could also be instrumental in helping fill the 168-pound vacancy. The winner of the "Super Six" tournament versus Lucian Bute (who is also under contract to Showtime) seems a good bet. And assuming Bute still holds down the number-two or number-one position by the time the Super Six concludes, it would be for the vacant RING championship.

Finally, now that number-one cruiserweight contender Steve Cunningham and number two Marco Huck are both promoted by Team Sauerland, there's a very good possibility they will eventually have a rematch with the vacant RING title on the line.

All of the pieces have to fall into place in order to fill even one of the four vacancies discussed here. But who knows? Maybe we'll get lucky; maybe all four will be filled. But regardless of what transpires, if you do see a new RING belt around the waist of a fighter, you can be assured he acquired it in the proper manner and is indeed the real champ. That much I can guarantee.

◆◆◆

I'm pleased to announce that THE RING's first-ever women's boxing column debuts in this issue *(see page 120)*. Written by Chris Richards, "The Sweeter Science" will shine a much-deserved spotlight on the women who sacrifice just as much and fight just as hard as their male counterparts.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

The Ring®

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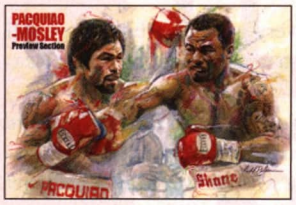
Donaire Might Not Be The New Pacquiao, But Comparisons Are Unavoidable

"It became clear immediately that we saw both a special performance and special perform-ER. Donaire had instantly entered an exclusive realm, one occupied by the likes of Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather."

By Mike Rosenthal



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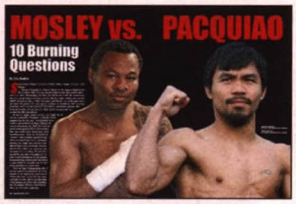
"There's no shortage of intriguing questions surrounding the Pacquiao-Mosley showdown. Here are 10 worth exploring."

By Eric Raskin



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"Every fight that generates this level of interest deserves a thorough analysis of the nuts-and-bolts—and that's where THE RING comes in."

By Lee Groves

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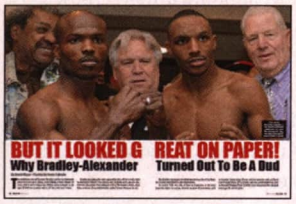
A collection of interesting fun stats covering everything from titlists beaten to how many days it's been since Mosley's last victory.



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Why Bradley-Alexander Turned Out To Be A Dud

"The undefeated duo of Timothy Bradley and Devon Alexander had a lot to live up to, thanks to the build-up of their January 29 bout, only to leave boxing fans feeling about as empty as the aged 80,000-seat stadium with 6,247 fans who bore witness."

By David Mayo

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By William Dettloff

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By Don Stradley

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"If I Was A Fighter—I'd Be Marvelous Marvin Hagler"

"He's been boxing broadcasting's white knight since he first began as the studio host of *Friday Night Fights* in the fall of 1998. While sports talking heads jibberjabber and try to fake their way through anything related to boxing, fight fans know what they hear from Brian Kenny is the genuine thing."

By Joseph Santoliquito

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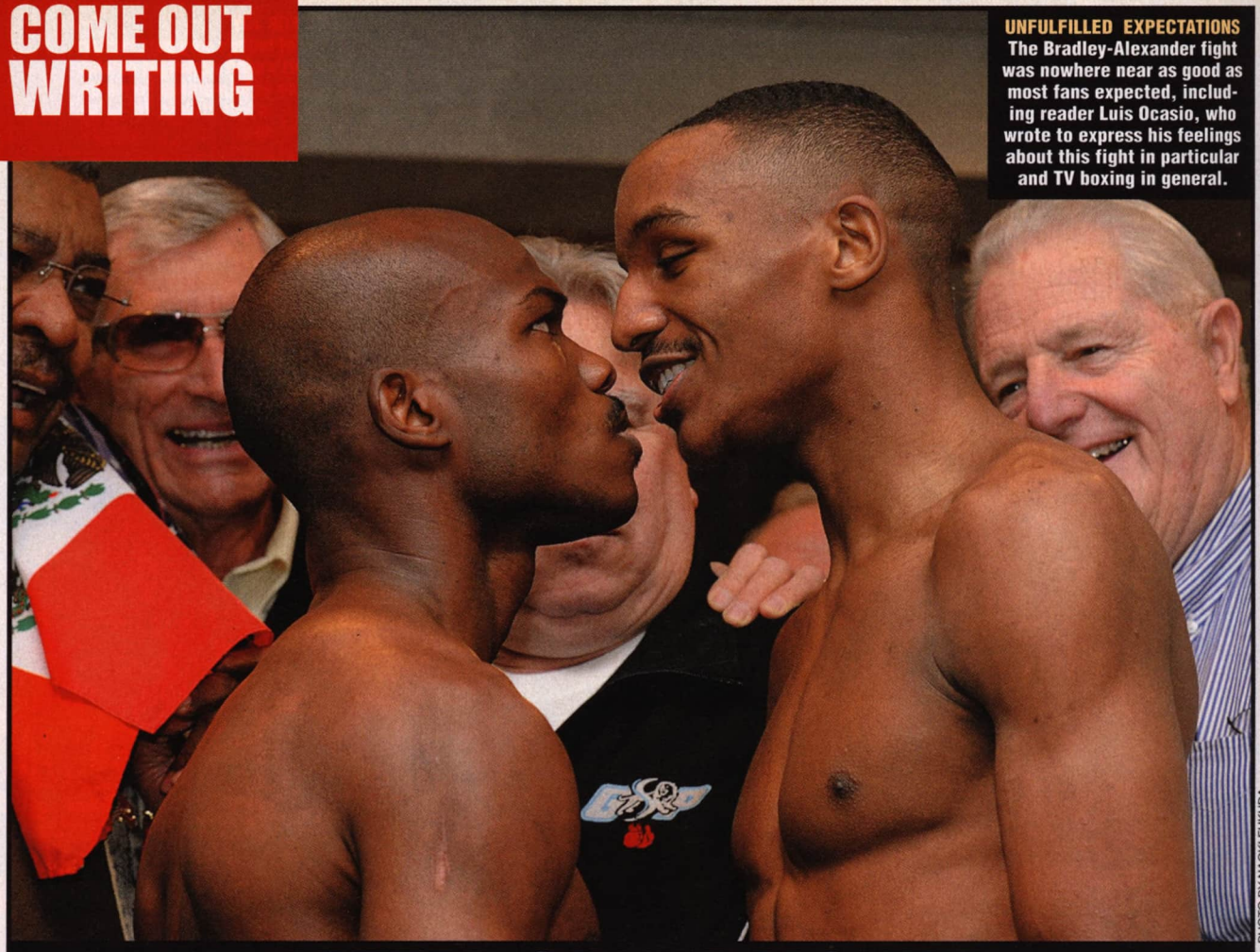
DOES MOSLEY HAVE ENOUGH
TO THREATEN PACQUIAO?
Find out on Page 38

JUMP FOR JOY

Sure, Nonito Donaire is one of today's very best fighters, but he's also one of the sport's most exuberant celebrators. Check his vertical leap as he watches Fernando Montiel struggle to regain his feet after suffering a vicious knockdown. If the "Filipino Flash" succeeds in his goal of winning the vacant RING 118-pound championship, he might just bump his head on the rafters.

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

COME OUT WRITING



UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS The Bradley-Alexander fight was nowhere near as good as most fans expected, including reader Luis Ocasio, who wrote to express his feelings about this fight in particular and TV boxing in general.

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

LETTER OF THE MONTH

TV Boxing: Good And Bad

I'm sure a lot of boxing fans have mixed feelings and theories on where this sport is going. As we all know, the TV networks run boxing. ESPN2 has done a great job with the budget they have. *Friday Night Fights* is the most consistent, educational boxing program in the market. Showtime has really stepped up their sports department. Sure, the "Super Six" nearly collapsed, but at least it was an original idea. I have been an HBO boxing fan for many years, but they simply aren't giving us the best boxing matches anymore. The poorly promoted, over-priced Tim Bradley vs. Devon Alexander fight was not a good way to start off the year. It's time HBO got it together. I see nothing on its early boxing calendar that leads me to believe otherwise.

LUIS OCASIO
Cathedral City, CA

Open Letter To Evander Holyfield

Fifteen years ago, you shocked the world when, against seemingly insurmountable odds, you destroyed Mike Tyson. It was a spectacle more historic than your unexpected conquest of Riddick Bowe and a display even more brilliant than your 15-round war with Dwight Muhammad Qawi. You are arguably one of the top five heavyweight champions to ever lace on gloves. However, and this is from a fan, it's time to hang 'em up. You've been embarrassed by James Toney and Chris Byrd, and have been reduced to fighting the likes of Francois Botha and Sherman Williams. Evander, you're pushing 50, and your days of miracles are long gone. Don't further tarnish your legacy.

BRAD MORRIS
Sweetbrad38@yahoo.com

Is Pacquiao's Legacy On The Line?

I believe the next two years are going to be a very important time for the legacy of Manny Pacquiao. According to his "Ringside" editorial in the March 2011 issue ("A Matter Of Perspective"), Nigel Collins believes that we should just sit back and enjoy the show regardless of how overmatched Manny's opponent might be. I disagree! Americans love when a fighter has to overcome adversity. It shows his true nature. Bernard Hopkins came off the deck twice at age 45 to school the 28-year-old Jean Pascal. Pac-Man needs a war! Without stiffer competition, Pacquiao might not be remembered as an all-time great.

DAVE KOVACS
Youngstown, OH

FEEDING OF THE FAT Undefeated heavyweight prospect Deontay Wilder clobbers an out-of-shape Alvaro Morales with a big right en route to third-round TKO. Despite the poor quality of his opposition, reader Jeremy Leete thinks Wilder has a bright future ahead of him.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Happy To Help

Dr. Margaret Goodman's column in the March 2011 issue of THE RING ("Alcohol: Riskier Than A Knockout Punch") was outstanding. As a former binge drinker like Kelly Pavlik, Ricky Hatton, and Julio Cesar Chavez Sr., I overlooked the negative effects on the body's nervous system as well as coordination and balance. During a recent meet and greet with Micky Ward, I was a drunken mess when Micky autographed my photo, writing "To Tim: Stop drinking be strong." This was shortly before I received a DUI. Being sober now, I realized how powerful alcohol is. According to the article, after six months without alcohol, the brain is able to repair itself, which is my current short-term goal, thanks to THE RING magazine and Dr. Goodman.

TIM GALLEGOS
Palm Springs, CA

Wild About Wilder

As we all know, quality heavyweights have been few and far between in America recently. Even though I've only seen him fight twice, 2008 Olympic bronze medalist Deontay Wilder is a prospect that I'm feeling optimistic about. At 6' 7" and with a huge reach, he's the right size for a modern heavyweight. Granted, most, if not all, of his wins have been against very mediocre opposition. But the speed, skill, and punching power he's displayed have been very impressive. Keep an eye on Deontay. With more experience against better opponents, he may have a very bright future.

JEREMY LEETE
Las Vegas, NV

TO WRITE THE RING

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E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

Lennox's Belt

In the December 2010 issue of THE RING, "Flashback" featured the September 2000 issue and stated that THE RING didn't have a championship policy at the time the issue it was reviewing was published. However, the cover of that magazine showed Lennox Lewis, wearing a RING belt. I was wondering how that came about.

TOM HARRISON
t.harrison@wlv.ac.uk

Editor's note: Awarding THE RING belt to Lewis was the genesis of what eventually evolved into the new RING Championship Policy. When Lewis unified the alphabet titles by beating Evander Holyfield in November 1999, only to be stripped by the WBA, THE RING gave Lewis a belt prior to the Michael Grant fight in order to let everybody know he was the legitimate world champion, regardless of what the WBA said. The official launch of the new policy came in the April 2002 issue. ■

BIRD LOVER Iron Mike in a scene from *Taking On Tyson*

Birdman Of The Bronx

If you're among those who, even after all these years, still can't get enough Mike Tyson on television (and let's face it, who can?), then Animal Planet has come to your rescue with *Taking On Tyson*, an unlikely but altogether enjoyable six-part docudrama that follows Iron Mike's foray into the surprisingly interesting and complex world of competitive pigeon racing.

The show's premise? Watching Tyson's inexperienced but eager team of homing pigeons compete against other teams in and around New York and northern New Jersey—hence the *Taking On Tyson* show name.

Aficionados will recall learning of Tyson's childlike fascination with the birds early in his career, when the boxing media latched onto it ostensibly to demonstrate the softer side of the man who at such a young age was waylaying big heavyweights like a one-man wrecking crew. The passing years and all of Tyson's myriad tragedies have done nothing to diminish his love for the animals. He reveals in the first episode that immediately following his 2002 kayo loss to Lennox Lewis, he flew from Memphis straight to his pigeon coop to be with his beloved birds. It is declared more than once by Tyson, and by the show's narrator, that the man is most at peace, even today, when surrounded by his pigeons. "In the best of times and in the worst of times, you go in the coop," Tyson says with a smile broad and sincere.

Like most shows in its genre, *Taking On Tyson* trades heavily in sentiment, but Tyson is such a tragic and charismatic figure, now more than ever, it's impossible not to be seduced by the drama, even where it is likely manufactured. As a counterweight, there is a fair amount of footage showing Tyson in his prime, bowling over one heavyweight after another, with the obvious parallels drawn between champion prizefighters and champion racing-pigeons. And it is warming to see Tyson almost as trim and fit as he was during his fighting days while at the same time apparently committed to "learning how to be humble."

Much of the show's charm is, well, Tyson's charm, which is wrapped up these days almost entirely in fearless confessionals. It's

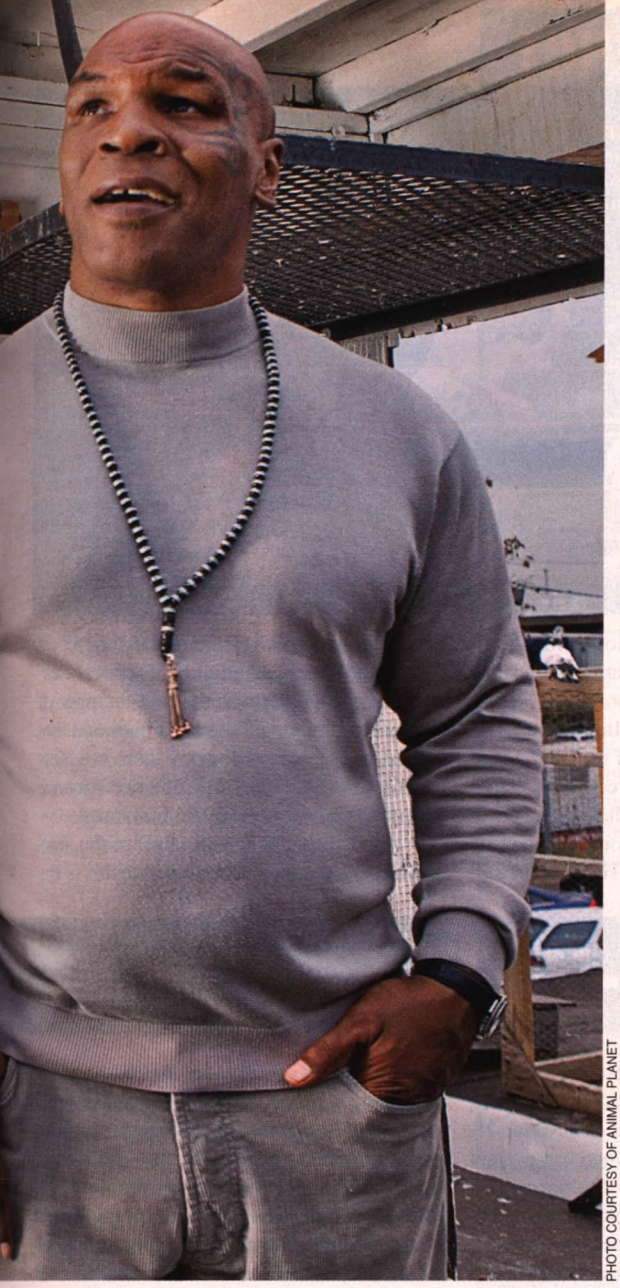


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANIMAL PLANET

an old shtick by now but no less captivating for its predictability.

Tyson isn't the show's only interesting character. There's his "team," which consists of a pair of young, reformed hoodlums, Rickie and Junior Roman, his coop caretakers and longtime friend Mario Costa, who owns the property atop of which Tyson's coop is perched, as well as the famed Ringside Gym in Jersey City. Then there's local pigeon-racing guru Vinnie Torre, whose job is to turn Tyson's team of young, inexperienced pigeons into champion racers, and the charming mess that is northern New Jersey, shot frequently and beautifully from high above.

The entire show is lavishly and lovingly produced and directed, and well worth the hour-long investment. Yes, Tyson is back, and, at least in this current post-boxing incarnation, he's never been better.

—William Dettloff

BOXING JAZZ

Weighing in with a solid 70 minutes of free jazz and varying hard bop textures, bassist Karl E.H. Seigfried has composed and crafted a set of fresh material called *Portrait of Jack Johnson* (Imaginary Chicago Records, 2010).

He comes out swinging with strong support from Greg Ward on alto sax and Frank Rosaly on drums.

The disc begins with "The Boxing Bassist Suite," consisting of the title track, "The Old Mongoose", and "Ezzard" based on Johnson, Archie Moore, and Ezzard Charles, respectively—each credited as a serious bottom man. How well the old champs really played may never be determined, but Seigfried is an obvious talent.

Eccentric icon Johnson was an offbeat dandy, and Seigfried's fitting first combination connects as he works up and down the frets using every inch of the ring. His bass solos would make a fine fight soundtrack.

Portraits in Jazz completes this volume, honoring collaborators or inspirations. On "Spheroid" and "Rosewell," Seigfried lays out guitar reverb and gets spacey but stays grounded. The trio peaks jamming tight chord corridors and certainly sounds worth seeing live.

Seigfried has played everything from symphonies to space rock. As producer, he didn't show off or get lost. Ward could be a contender from the Joe Lovano Gym, while Rosaly has plenty of pop.

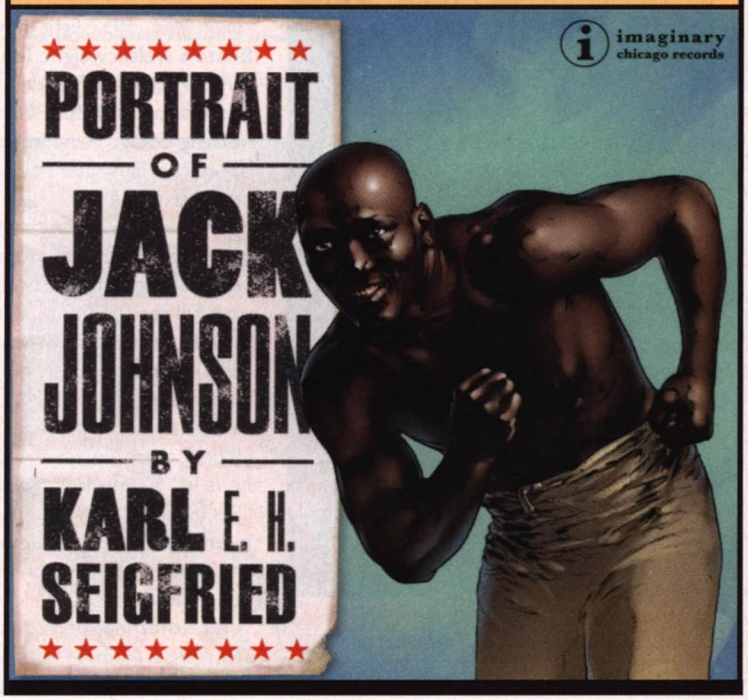
Jazz, like boxing, is often a harsh mistress. It's tough to find major mainstream success through an art form that's outside the mainstream. Like other progressive jazz heroes, Seigfried's band may never find the commercial rewards they deserve. Luckily, the best artists are usually fighters who don't let that stop them.

Jacket material lists a quote regarding Charles from *The New York Times*, stating "Ezz slaps it and bows it with the best of them."

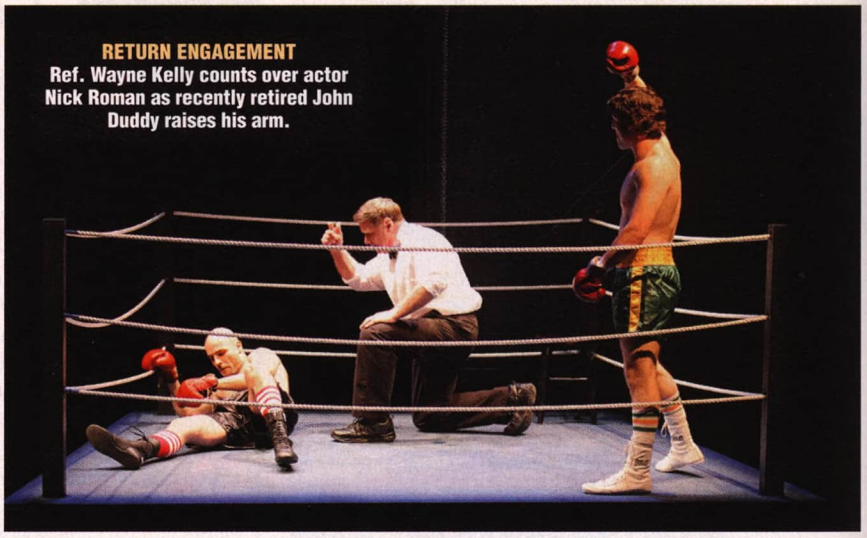
With plenty of pluck, deep, nimble nuances and good compositional imagination, it sounds like Seigfried is getting into shape for challenging the elite ranks himself. Lines are posted from Chitown to Dixieland but never derivative.

Seigfried knows how to experiment with tradition. That's a championship trait.

—Phil Woolever



Return Of *Kid Shamrock*



RETURN ENGAGEMENT
Ref. Wayne Kelly counts over actor Nick Roman as recently retired John Duddy raises his arm.

Kid Shamrock sold out twice in its two-day run off Broadway back in June 2007. The one-act play about the career and struggles of former light heavyweight contender Bobby Cassidy could have faded away, but retired cruiserweight Seamus McDonough enjoyed portraying Cassidy so much that he continually pushed for another round.

And so it was that *Kid Shamrock* made a comeback after a break of nearly four years. The production enjoyed a successful one-week run in February at the Atlantic Theatre Company in Manhattan. Despite playing in a larger venue than the first time around, *Kid Shamrock* was viewed by a full house on five of its seven showings.

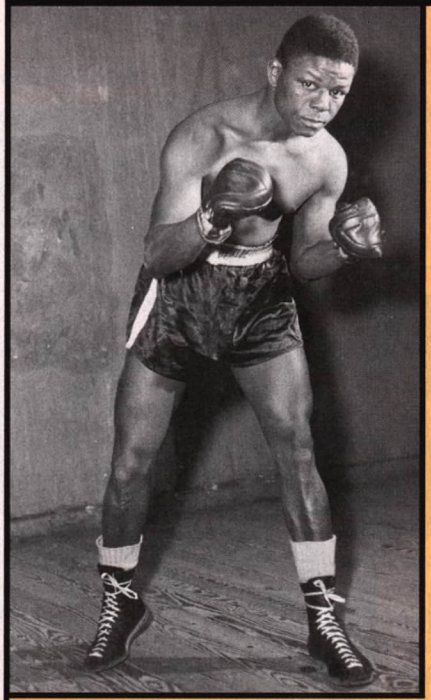
"Ever since the first time, Seamus wanted to do it again," said Bobby Cassidy Jr., who wrote the play as a tribute to his father. "Slowly but surely, we started to put the cast together. It all just came together."

The venue wasn't the only change from 2007. Jimmy Smallhorne took over the directing reigns, and McDonough, who portrayed the younger version of Cassidy in the original production, played the part of the older Cassidy. Cassidy, 66, now closes the show with a dramatic monologue in which he reveals to the audience that he's the subject of the play.

Much of the attention this time was focused on a new member of the cast: John Duddy. The Irish middleweight had announced his retirement from the ring January 15. A few days later, McDonough contacted Duddy about *Kid Shamrock*. He took on the role of the younger version of Cassidy, a part that included several emotional scenes. Cassidy Jr. said Duddy was the first member of the cast to memorize all of his lines and that he had no problems delivering them in a New York accent. Duddy's surprising performance netted rave reviews from the Irish press.

"My dad would be sitting off to the side, and he'd be getting choked up, like this is my

VIRGIL AKINS, 1928-2011



HONEYBEAR
Former welter champ Akins dies at age 82

When the Massachusetts boxing commission conferred world title status on the October 29, 1957, fight between top-ranked Boston welterweight Tony DeMarco and Virgil "Honeybear" Akins, National Boxing Association president Gilbert Jackson said nothing doing. "How in heaven's name can they pick a fifth-rater and call it a title fight?" he sneered.

The fifth-ranked Akins knocked DeMarco out in 14, and, six months, later nobody was sneering at the St. Louis native when he won full recognition as 147-pound champion with an "almost awe-inspiring" (*The New York Times*) destruction of Vince Martinez in four rounds.

"It is the hope of all in boxing that [Akins] can maintain this sensational stride he is in," wrote Johnny Salak in THE RING. "Such performances do much to renew interest in boxing, while helping a colorful and deserving champion to stack up a neat bundle for himself."

Neither happened. Just six months after that, Akins—who passed away on January 22 at age 82—looked so abysmal dropping a 15-round decision and his title to Don Jordan that it brought to mind what columnist Red Smith had once written about him: "When a top-ranked battler loses as often as Akins has done, the charitable put him away as an in-and-outer, and the cynics cock an ear for the clank of handcuffs. It is the latter group that has looked askance at Virgil, implying that there have been evenings when the tiger had to operate in a cage."

If not a cage, at least under a big Gray cloud—as in "Mr. Gray," Frankie Carbo, the racketeer who controlled boxing in the 1950s, making and breaking careers and cutting up purses. Akins was officially handed by Bernie Glickman, a puppet at the end of one of Carbo's tentacles. At several of Akins' major bouts, the subpoenas flew as fast outside the ropes as the punches did between them.

When he lost a rematch to Jordan in 1959, the IRS attacked Akins' purse for back taxes, a blow as staggering to the man who'd been the main provider for his family since

life and John Duddy's doing it," Cassidy Jr. said. "I think John approached it like a fight. That's how seriously he took it."

The cast also included veteran character actor Patrick Joseph Connolly as a drunken salesman, retired English cruiserweight Gary Hope as Cassidy cornerman Paddy Flood, and Wayne Kelly as the referee. It was a familiar role for Kelly, who had to miss the second showing after the New York State Athletic Commission assigned him to officiate three bouts on a February 9 fight card.

It doesn't appear as if *Kid Shamrock* is ready to retire just yet. Cassidy Jr. said he has received offers for another run. He's also sold the Hollywood rights to *Entourage* star Kevin Connolly, and a movie script is currently being developed.

"Producers approached us after several of the shows, wanting to do it again," Cassidy Jr. said. "That was really unexpected, but welcome, of course. To be able to tell my dad's story is important. Him being a more active part of it this time made the experience more emotional and richer, with him being there with me side by side."

—Don Stewart

he was nine years old as anything Jordan threw at him.

In 1962, a detached retina ended the Honeybear's 14-year pro career at 60-31-2 (34), which included wins over lightweight champions Wallace "Bud" Smith and Joe Brown. Akins also fought world champions Johnny Saxton, Luis Rodriquez, Denny Moyer, and Ralph Dupas.

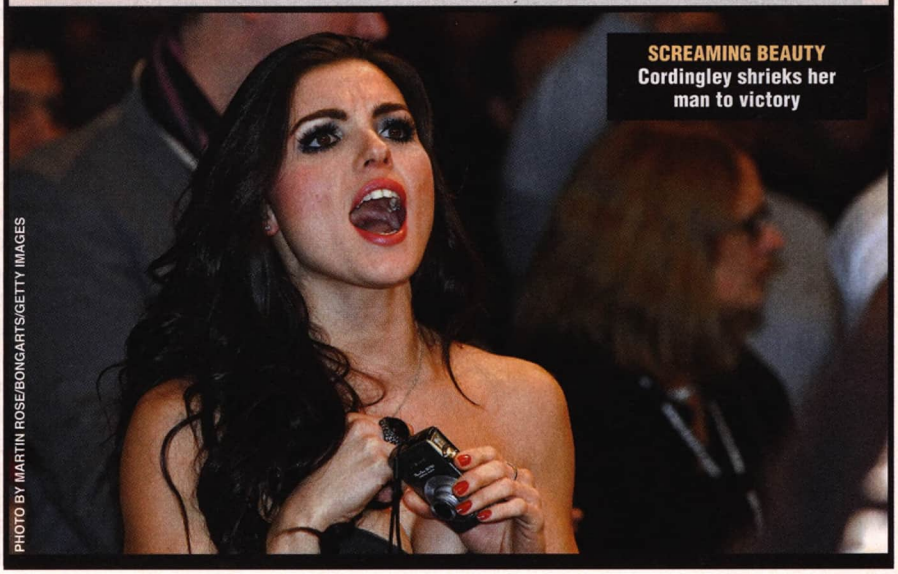
His biggest asset in the ring was a powerful right hand. "When he connects," Carmine Basilio once said, "something has to give."

In 1952, boxing writer Ray Grody described Akins as "no stranger to the hard knocks of life," and a fighter who "found the road to boxing fame a rugged test." Akins shrugged and said, "I gotta eat, don't I?" In '56, the veteran contender earned a whopping $56 for a main-event win over Rudolph Bent. After he became undisputed champion, Akins went on national TV and talked about his love for the Bible. Rest in peace.

—Pete Ehrmann

TOP 10 SOON-TO-BE-USED REASONS FOR FIGHTERS PULLING OUT OF THE "SUPER SIX" SEMIFINALS

1. Andre Ward fails prefight eye exam after staring too long at Dan Goossen's yellow sport coat
2. Rachel Cordingley's shrieking perforates Carl Froch's eardrum
3. Gus Johnson's shrieking perforates Carl Froch's eardrum
4. Scheduled May fight date conflicts with old man Glen Johnson's colonoscopy
5. Sakio Bika shows up at a prefight press conference, engages in impromptu outside-the-tournament matches, opens headbutt-induced cuts over everyone's eyes
6. The Ghost of Christmas Future visits Arthur Abraham and shows him what happens in his fight with Ward, convincing "King Arthur" that another one-sided loss isn't quite his best career move
7. Lou DiBella pulls Johnson out after a desperate Ross Greenburg loses his mind and offers Johnson a 17-fight, $250-million deal with HBO
8. With none of his fighters in the tournament anymore, Gary Shaw sabotages the event by eating Abraham whole
9. Encouraged by his success shedding weight to get to 168, Johnson opts to enter Showtime bantamweight tourney instead
10. Andre Dirrell's lawyer instructs all four remaining combatants not to fight if cameras are rolling



SCREAMING BEAUTY
Cordingley shrieks her man to victory

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

BOXING BOOKSHELF

My late friend Paul Cavagnaro, a top heavyweight prospect in the late 1940s, enjoyed describing the apoplexy suffered by George Engel, who'd managed Harry Greb, when Dutch Meyers, Cavagnaro's co-manager, once insisted that Bert Colima would've taken "The Pittsburgh Windmill," maybe the most fearsome boxer ever.

Meyers had managed Colima, who in the 1920s was to Latino fans what Golden Boys Art Aragon and Oscar De La Hoya would later become, but never won a title except for the middleweight championships of Mexico and the Pacific Coast.

In this homage to his father, *Gentleman of the Ring: The Bert Colima Story*, 78-year-old Bert W. Colima steers clear of Greb but does say that his dad "boxed circles around" then-heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey in a 1926 sparring session.

Overweening filial pride? Maybe not. In 1933, THE RING's Harold Joyce wrote that Dempsey "considered Colima the best boxer in the world, and, had he been tutored a lot more carefully, he would have ruled the middleweight division."

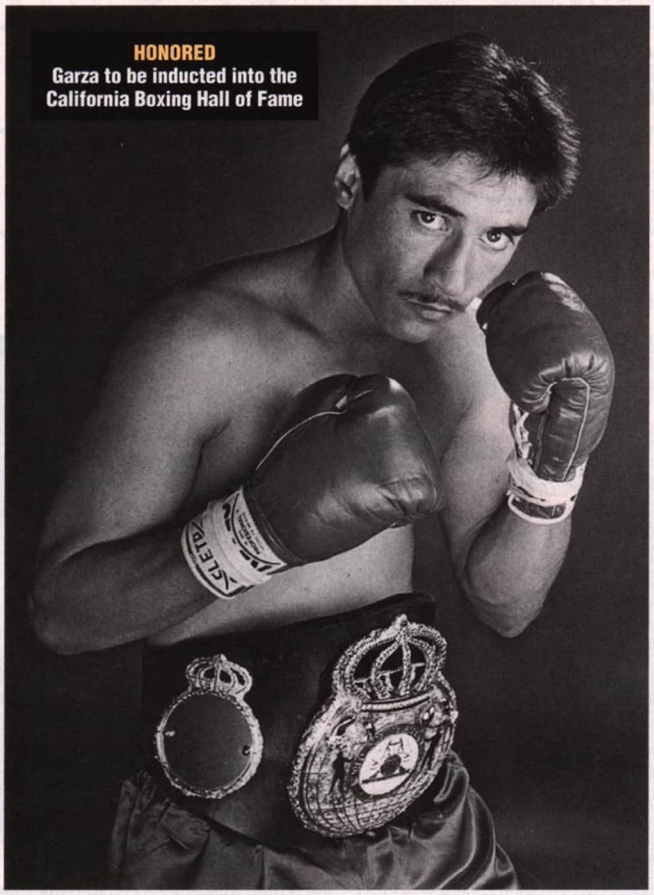
Born Epifanio Romero in Whittier, California, Colima—who rechristened himself after his grandmother's hometown in Mexico—was "the most powerful gate magnet California has ever known," wrote Joyce. "He could pack them in week after week."

In 1928, Portland sportswriter Dean Snyder wrote, "When Colima fights, Mexican mothers come carrying their babies in their arms. He's a great fighter to his people—win or lose."

Colima beat welterweight contender Dave Shade, but losses to Mickey Walker and Ace Hudkins in the biggest fights of his 200-bout career give George Engel a whopping advantage in the great debate. Colima saw himself as just a "lucky guy who got the breaks," but the "Whittier Flash"—who was inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1997—Is worthy of the new spotlight his son's book shines on him. The prose doesn't exactly sparkle—young Bert was in the insurance game—but it's an easy and fun read.

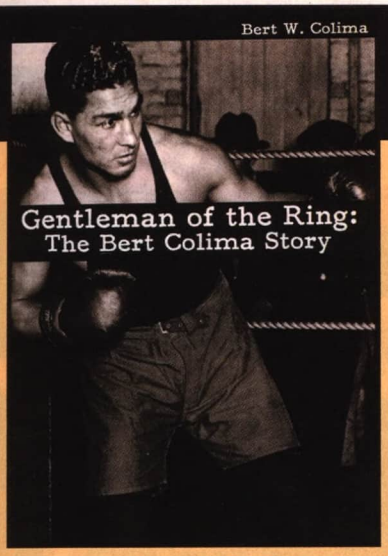
—Pete Ehrmann

Outside The Ropes



HONORED
Garza to be inducted into the California Boxing Hall of Fame

Former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** and his wife, **Lakiha Spicer Tyson**, welcomed a new baby boy into the world on January 25, 2011. The couple already has a two-year-old daughter named Milan. All told, Tyson has seven children … An Abu Dhabi-based company is planning to create a **Manny Pacquiao** online pay-to-play video game. "We're not necessarily going to focus on boxing. We're going to focus on Manny and all the different things he can represent," said **David Ortiz**, general manager of Karkadann Games, a subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Media Company … On June 25, the California Boxing Hall of Fame will induct seven new members at the Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City. The living inductees include **Gene Fullmer**, **Tony Tubbs**, **Loreto Garza**, and **Zack Padilla**. **Willie Pep**, **Fritzie Zivic**, **and Bob Fitzsimmons** will be inducted into the posthumous category … New York Representative **Peter King** and Arizona Senator **John McCain** plan to reintroduce a congressional resolution urging a pardon for former heavyweight champion **Jack Johnson**. Both House and Senate passed the resolution during the last session of Congress, but **President Obama** didn't act upon it. **Linda Haywood**, one of Johnson's great-great nieces, is writing to Obama about the case. "I think having a letter from a family member will help put a face on our pleas," Haywood told the Associated Press … Former IBF, WBC, and WBO featherweight titleholder **Naseem Hamed**, 37, was fined almost $2,000 for driving with no insurance … Welterweight **Joan Guzman**, 34, was suspended for eight months by the Nevada State Athletic Commission for failing a postfight drug test following his December 12 bout with **Jason Davis** in Las Vegas. The Dominican tested positive for a banned diuretic … Heavyweight **Shannon Briggs** filed a lawsuit in New York Supreme Court against **Gregory D. Cohen**, **Shelly Finkel**, and **Barry Honig**, alleging breach of fiduciary duty, conversion, unjust enrichment, and breach of contract.



GENTLEMAN OF THE RING: THE BERT COLIMA STORY
By Bert W. Colima
Magic Valley Publishers, soft cover
177 pages, $14.99

OBITUARIES

South African legend **Nkosana "Happyboy" Mgxaji** died in Durban on January 27 at the age of 61. He began boxing at the age of eight, turned pro in May 1969, and had only lost once in 73 fights when he challenged WBA junior lightweight titleholder **Samuel Serrano** on April 14, 1979, in Capetown. Mgxaji knocked down Serrano in the fifth round, but the Puerto Rican recovered to stop Mgzaji in the eighth. "Happyboy" was so popular in the city of Mdantsane that, according to South African boxing writer **Ron Jackson**, "He regularly attracted crowds of more than 25,000 to Sisa Dukashe Stadium." In a tribute to the fallen warrior, writer **Xolela Mangcu** said: "Mgxaji was not only the greatest boxing sensation this country has produced but also a social institution in the Eastern Cape. His story is not just one about boxing. Instead, it is a story about a social and cultural ritual that revolved around one particular individual. For years on end, Saturday afternoons became social events as thousands of people thronged to Sisa Dukashe Stadium in Mdantsane to see their boxing prince, their own boxing royalty." Mgxaji's overall record of 88-9-4 (27) included winning the South African junior lightweight and junior welterweight titles. He had his final fight on December 21, 1985. By 2007, Mgxaji was ill and living in poverty … **Herman Dube**, who boxed under the name of **Tiger Pyle**, died at the Moncton (New Brunswick, Canada) Hospital on February 5 at the age of 81. After a brief professional career, Dube ran an amateur boxing club in Moncton and also served as an official with the local boxing commission. In 1988, he was inducted into the Canadian Boxing Hall of Fame.

The suit stems from Briggs' October 16, 2010, fight with **Vitali Klitschko** in Hamburg, Germany, in which Briggs was so badly hurt he spent 12 days in a German hospital after the fight. Briggs claims that he was only paid $25,000 of his $750,000 purse … Russian police have detained **Soslan Abayev** as a suspect in the murder of unbeaten super middleweight prospect **Khteag Kozayev**, who was shot to death at the Mirage nightclub in Vladikavkaz on June 13, 2010. Kozayev, who turned pro in December 2008 and had his final fight on April 24, 2010, was 10-0 (9) at the time of his death … Bantamweight **Emily Klinefelter** is recovering from a burst blood vessel in her brain that was suffered in a February 5 bout with **Christina Ruiz** in Iowa City, Iowa. "Emily is doing well," said **Adam Pollack**, who is both Klinefelter's promoter and husband. "The doctors feel that there is a high probability of a strong recovery." Klinefelter, who entered the Ruiz bout with a 9-0 (3) record, was knocked down four times before the bout was stopped in the third round. "I could see her eyes rolling back every time I hit her," said Ruiz, 6-3-1 (4). "I'm surprised they didn't stop it earlier" … **Anthony Jones**, 28, died at the University Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas, on January 30, after being knocked out by **Quincy Palmer** the previous evening in Benton, Arkansas. Jones, who was making his pro debut, had been a football standout at El Dorado High School, from which he graduated in 2002.

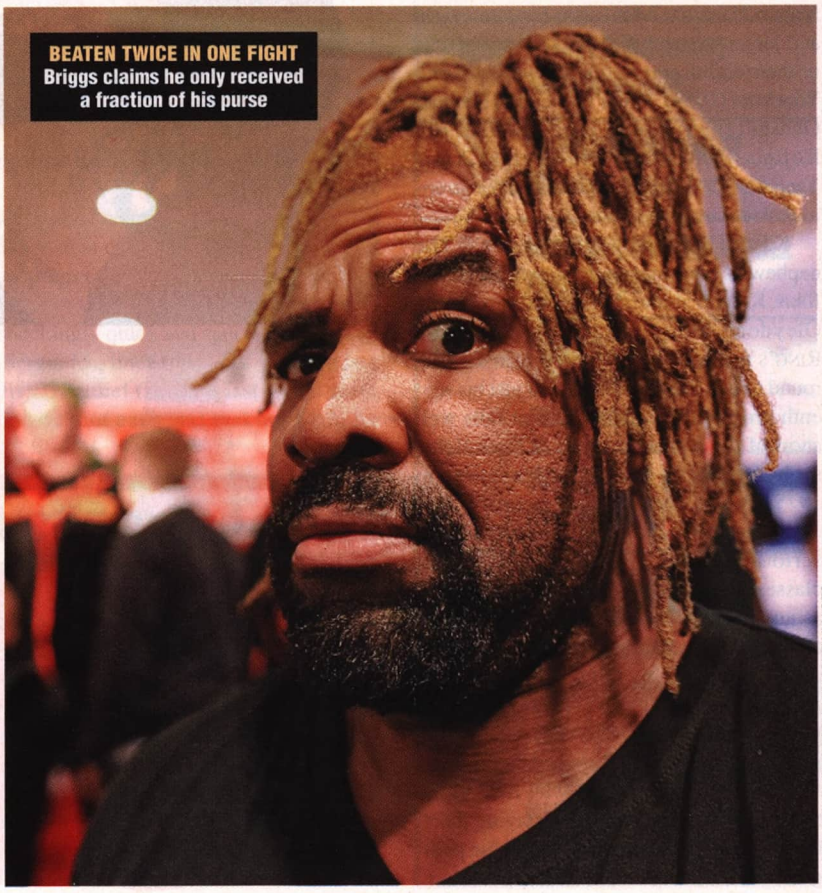

BEATEN TWICE IN ONE FIGHT
Briggs claims he only received a fraction of his purse

PHOTO BY ODD ANDERSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

KAZUTO IOKA

The Japanese seem to have a knack for producing young fighters who race toward their first title belt. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (1991) and Nobuo Nashiro (2006) won bantamweight and junior bantamweight belts, respectively, in their eighth pro fights. Flyweight Kenji Yonekura (1959), junior flyweight Hideyuki Ohashi (1986), junior bantamweight Eiji Kojima (2002), and strawweight Akira Yaegashi (2007) each challenged for straps in their seventh pro bouts.

Kazuto Ioka has topped them all. The nephew of two-division former titlist Hiroki Ioka, Kazuto stunned previously unbeaten Oleydong Sithsamerchai, stopping THE RING's second-rated strawweight in the fifth round to win the WBC trinket in just his seventh pro fight. While Ioka's feat falls well short of the alphabet record of three fights set by Thailand's Saengsak Muangsurin in 1975, it's still a new national record.

More importantly, Ioka appears to be a serious new force in the sub-flyweight classes. He was a six-time national champ as an amateur who quit school to turn pro after a controversial decision loss cost him a spot at the Beijing Olympic Games. The 21-year-old has a bit of swagger as well, which was evidenced by his occasional showboating against the respected veteran Sithsamerchai. Prospects who race to the top tend to have a tough time staying there, but Ioka could have the skills and the pedigree to stick around for a while.

RATINGS ANALYSIS

For Period Ended February 20, 2011

Heavyweights: No changes.

Cruiserweights: Yoan Pablo Hernandez debuts at 10, courtesy of his knockout of Steve Herelius. Hernandez' entrance pushes out Pawel Kolodziej (ninth last issue) and enables Guillermo Jones (10th last issue) to move to nine.

Light Heavyweights: No changes.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: No changes.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: Jan Zaveck (seventh last issue) switches with Joshua Clottey (sixth last issue) after Zaveck stopped Paul Delgado. Clottey has not fought since his loss to Manny Pacquiao on March 13, 2010.

Junior Welterweights: Tim Bradley stays at number one after his technical decision over Devon Alexander (third last issue), who drops to four and enables Marcos Maidana (fourth last issue) to move to three. Alexander's demotion came based partly on the way Maidana fought against second-ranked Amir Khan.

Lightweights: No changes.

Junior Lightweights: Takashi Uchiyama (fourth last issue) advances to three, thanks to his knockout of Tasashi Miura. Uchiyama switches with Roman Martinez (third last issue), who falls to four.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: Akifumi Shimoda makes a big splash at two after decisioning Ryol Li Lee (second last issue), who falls to three and pushes down everyone rated below one slot each and forces out Rendell Munroe (10th last issue).

Bantamweights: Nonito Donaire climbs from five to one after his emphatic second-round TKO over Fernando Montiel (first last issue), who sinks to five. Nehomar Cermeno (seventh last issue) exits to fight at junior featherweight. His departure enables everybody ranked seven or below to move up and allows veteran Malcolm Tunacao to reenter at 10.

Junior Bantamweights: Tomas Rojas (third last issue) and Nobuo Nashiro (second last issue) trade places because of Rojas' 12-round decision over Nashiro. Omar Narvaez (sixth last issue) jumps to five on the strength of his 12-round decision over Victor Zaleta. Narvaez' move slides down Drain Francisco to six.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: Jesus Geles debuts at 10 after beating Ramon Garcia Hirales (10th last issue), who exits.

Strawweights: Kazuto Ioka pulled off a major upset in just his seventh fight, knocking out Oleydong Sithsamerchai (second last issue). Ioka jumps in at two, replacing Sithsamerchai, who drops to three. Everyone ranked three and below drops one place, forcing out Kwanthai Sithmorseng (10th last issue).

Pound-for-Pound: Donaire's TKO of Montiel was shockingly quick and spectacular enough to advance him from five to three, bumping down Sergio Martinez (third last issue) to four and Juan Manuel Marquez (fourth last issue) to five. Montiel (seventh last issue) exits, allowing everyone rated below seven to move up one slot each and making room for Giovani Segura to debut at 10.

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

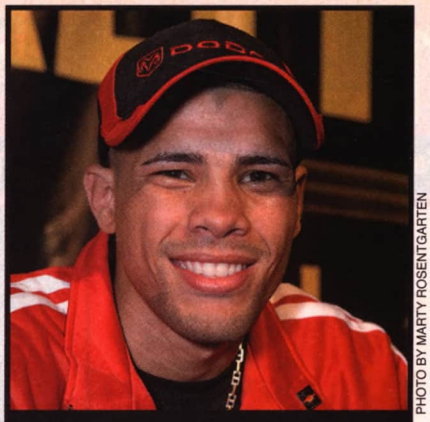


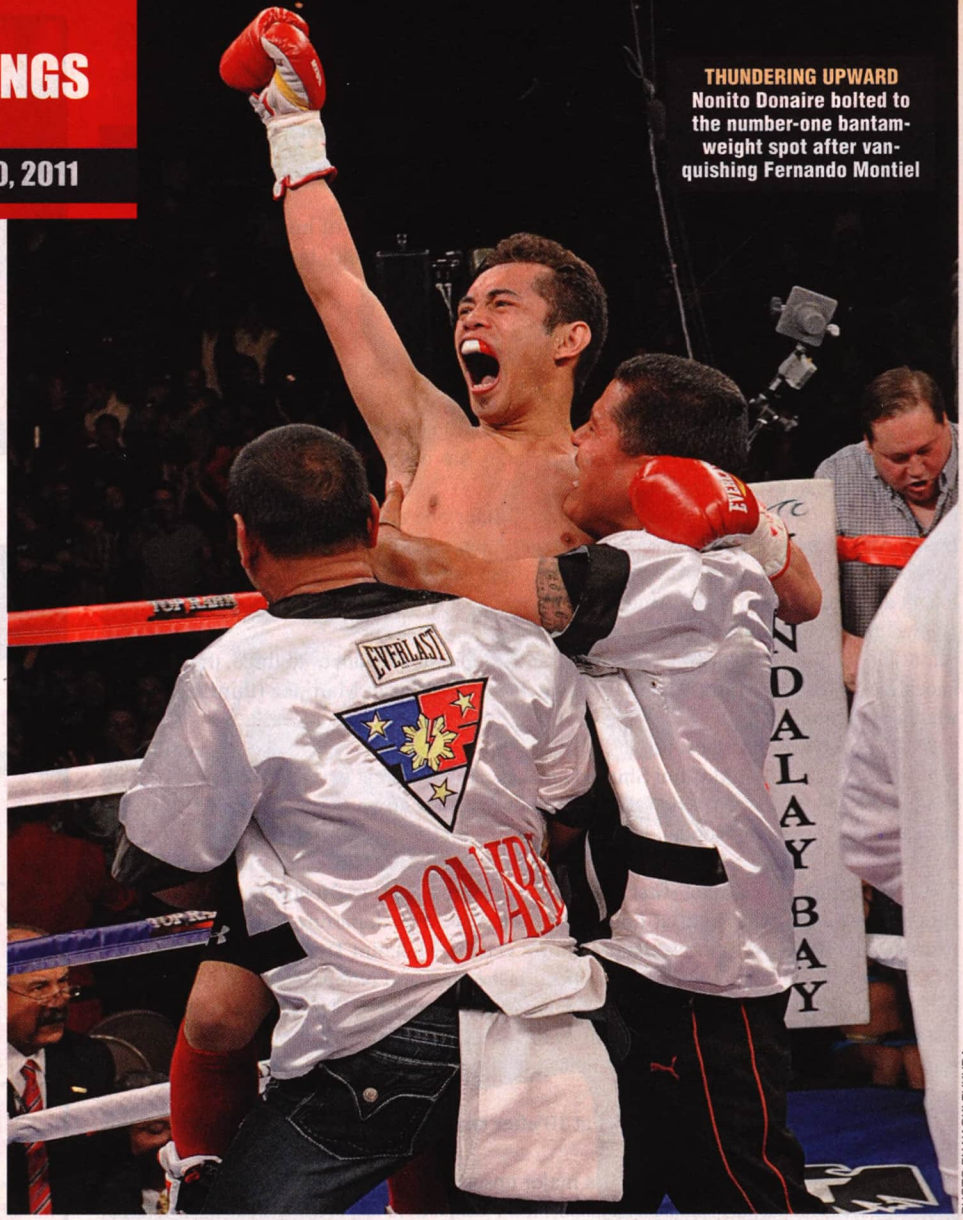
PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENTGARTEN

POUND FOR POUND

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO** *Welterweight*
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** *Welterweight*
3. **NONITO DONAIRE** *Bantamweight*
4. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** *Middleweight*
5. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** *Lightweight*
6. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** *Flyweight*
7. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** *Heavyweight*
8. **TIM BRADLEY** *Junior Welterweight/ Welterweight*
9. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** *Featherweight*
10. **GIOVANI SEGURA** *Junior Flyweight*

The RING RATINGS

For Period Ended February 20, 2011



THUNDERING UPWARD
Nonito Donaire bolted to the number-one bantamweight spot after vanquishing Fernando Montiel

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to ringtv.com

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 55-3 (49)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 41-2 (38)
2. **DAVID HAYE**
England 25-1 (23)
3. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 21-0 (15)
4. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 43-1 (28)
5. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 26-1-1 (17)
6. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 36-2 (18)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 27-0 (22)
8. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-2 (34)
9. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 30-1 (20)
10. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 30-2 (26)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 24-2 (12)
2. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 31-1 (23)
3. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 44-2-1 (32)
4. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
Russia 21-1 (16)
5. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 24-2 (16)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 31-3 (27)
7. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 27-3-1 (11)
8. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 15-2-3 (6)
9. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 37-3-2 (29)
10. **YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ**
Cuba 24-1 (13)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JEAN PASCAL
Haiti 26-1-1 (16)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 51-5-2 (32)
2. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
Tallahassee, FL 22-0 (18)
3. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 29-1 (17)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 51-14-2 (35)
5. **NATHAN CLEVERLY**
Wales 21-0 (10)
6. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 27-2 (15)
7. **KARO MURAT**
Iraq 22-1 (13)
8. **BEIBUT SHUMENOV**
Kazakhstan 11-1 (7)
9. **CHRIS HENRY**
Houston, TX 25-2 (20)
10. **GABRIEL CAMPILLO**
Spain 20-3 (7)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 23-0 (13)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 27-0 (22)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 27-1 (21)
4. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 43-2 (32)
5. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
Flint, MI 19-1 (13)
6. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 28-5-2 (19)
7. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
Germany 39-2 (23)
8. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 29-3 (22)
9. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 51-14-2 (35)
10. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 32-2 (26)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: SERGIO MARTINEZ
Argentina 46-2-2 (25)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 35-2-1 (15)
2. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 36-2 (32)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 34-3-1 (16)
4. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 39-2 (27)
5. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 24-1 (15)
6. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
England 28-2 (19)
7. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany 30-0 (10)
8. **DMITRY PIROG**
Russia 17-0 (14)
9. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 39-12 (23)
10. **HASSAN N'DAM N'JIKAM**
France 25-0 (17)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **KERMIT CINTRON**
   Reading, PA 32-3-1 (28)
2. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
   Mexico 19-1 (16)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 35-2 (28)
4. **RYAN RHODES**
   England 45-4 (31)
5. **SECHEW POWELL**
   Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (15)
6. **YURI FOREMAN**
   Belarus 28-1 (8)
7. **VANES MARTIROSYAN**
   Armenia 28-0 (17)
8. **SERGIY DZINZIRUK**
   Ukraine 37-0 (23)
9. **CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE**
   Detroit, MI 30-4 (18)
10. **SAUL ALVAREZ**
    Mexico 35-0-1 (26)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines 52-3-2 (38)
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 41-0 (25)
3. **ANDRE BERTO**
   Winter Haven, FL 27-0 (21)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 35-2 (28)
5. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 46-6-1 (39)
6. **JAN ZAVECK**
   Slovenia 31-1 (18)
7. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
   Ghana 35-4 (20)
8. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
   Ukraine 31-0 (20)
9. **RAFAL JACKIEWICZ**
   Poland 36-9-1 (18)
10. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
    Palm Springs, CA 27-0 (11)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   Palm Springs, CA 27-0 (11)
2. **AMIR KHAN**
   England 24-1 (17)
3. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
   Argentina 29-2 (27)
4. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
   St. Louis, MO 21-1 (13)
5. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
   Ukraine 31-4-1 (13)
6. **JUAN URANGO**
   Colombia 22-3-1 (17)
7. **KAIZER MABUZA**
   South Africa 23-6-3 (14)
8. **LAMONT PETERSON**
   Washington, D.C. 28-1-1 (14)
9. **VICTOR ORTIZ**
   Garden City, KN 28-2-2 (22)
10. **PAUL MCCLOSKEY**
    England 22-0 (12)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 52-5-1 (38)

1. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
   Venezuela 27-8-2 (21)
2. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
   Mexico 54-7-2 (32)
3. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
   Australia 27-3 (22)
4. **ALI FUNEKA**
   South Africa 30-3-3 (25)
5. **BRANDON RIOS**
   Lubbock, TX 26-0-1 (19)
6. **JOHN MURRAY**
   England 30-0 (18)
7. **PAULUS MOSES**
   Namibia 26-1 (18)
8. **URBANO ANTILLON**
   Mexico 28-2 (20)
9. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
   Mexico 27-3 (12)
10. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
    Gilroy, CA 28-1-1 (18)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MZONKE FANA**
   South Africa 30-4 (12)
2. **RICKY BURNS**
   Scotland 30-2 (7)
3. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
   Japan 17-0 (14)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
   Puerto Rico 24-1-1 (15)
5. **JORGE SOLIS**
   Mexico 40-2-2 (29)
6. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
   Mexico 22-1-1 (16)
7. **JORGE LINARES**
   Venezuela 30-1 (19)
8. **TAKAHIRO AO**
   Japan 20-2-1 (9)
9. **ARGENIS MENDEZ**
   Dominican Republic 18-1 (9)
10. **JASON LITZAU**
    St. Paul, MN 28-2 (21)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
   Puerto Rico 30-0 (27)
2. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
   Cuba 19-0 (15)
3. **CHRIS JOHN**
   Indonesia 44-0-2 (22)
4. **ORLANDO SALIDO**
   Mexico 34-11-2 (22)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
   Mexico 41-2 (34)
6. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
   Mexico 39-12-2 (23)
7. **ELIO ROJAS**
   Dominican Republic 22-1 (13)
8. **BERNABE CONCEPCION**
   Philippines 28-4-1 (15)
9. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico 39-6 (35)
10. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
    Japan 29-3 (12)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
   Japan 37-4-3 (23)
2. **AKIFUMI SHIMODA**
   Japan 23-2-1 (10)
3. **RYOL LI LEE**
   Japan 17-2-1 (8)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGDAENGGYM**
   Thailand 42-2 (29)
5. **STEVE MOLITOR**
   Canada 33-1 (12)
6. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
   Cuba 7-0 (5)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
   Panama 37-3-2 (23)
8. **TAKALANI NDLOVU**
   South Africa 31-6 (18)
9. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
   South Africa 24-3-2 (14)
10. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ JR.**
    Puerto Rico 20-0-1 (17)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   Philippines 26-1 (18)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
   Panama 30-1-1 (10)
3. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
   Ghana 28-2 (22)
4. **ABNER MARES**
   Mexico 21-0-1 (13)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 44-3-2 (34)
6. **YONNHY PEREZ**
   Colombia 20-1-1 (14)
7. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 43-2 (21)
8. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Armenia 35-3-1 (27)
9. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 24-1 (15)
10. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
    Philippines 28-2-3 (17)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUGO CAZARES**
   Mexico 34-6-2 (24)
2. **TOMAS ROJAS**
   Mexico 35-12-1 (23)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan 14-3-1 (9)
4. **KOHEI KONO**
   Japan 25-5 (9)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 33-0-2 (19)
6. **DRIAN FRANCISCO**
   Philippines 20-0-1 (16)
7. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
   Mexico 41-6-2 (18)
8. **CESAR SEDA**
   Puerto Rico 20-0 (15)
9. **YOTA SATO**
   Japan 20-2-1 (11)
10. **JUAN ALBERTO ROSAS**
    Mexico 32-6 (26)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM
Thailand 79-3-1 (43)

1. **DAISUKE NAITO**
   Japan 36-3-3 (23)
2. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
   Panama 22-1 (17)
3. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
   Japan 36-6-2 (17)
4. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
   Thailand 51-3-1 (21)
5. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
   South Africa 26-2 (17)
6. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
   Mexico 34-5-1 (27)
7. **ROCKY FUENTES**
   Philippines 28-6-2 (18)
8. **MILAN MELINDO**
   Philippines 23-0 (7)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico 41-6 (24)
10. **TOMONOBU SHIMIZU**
    Japan 17-3-1 (8)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: GIOVANI SEGURA
Mexico 26-1-1 (22)

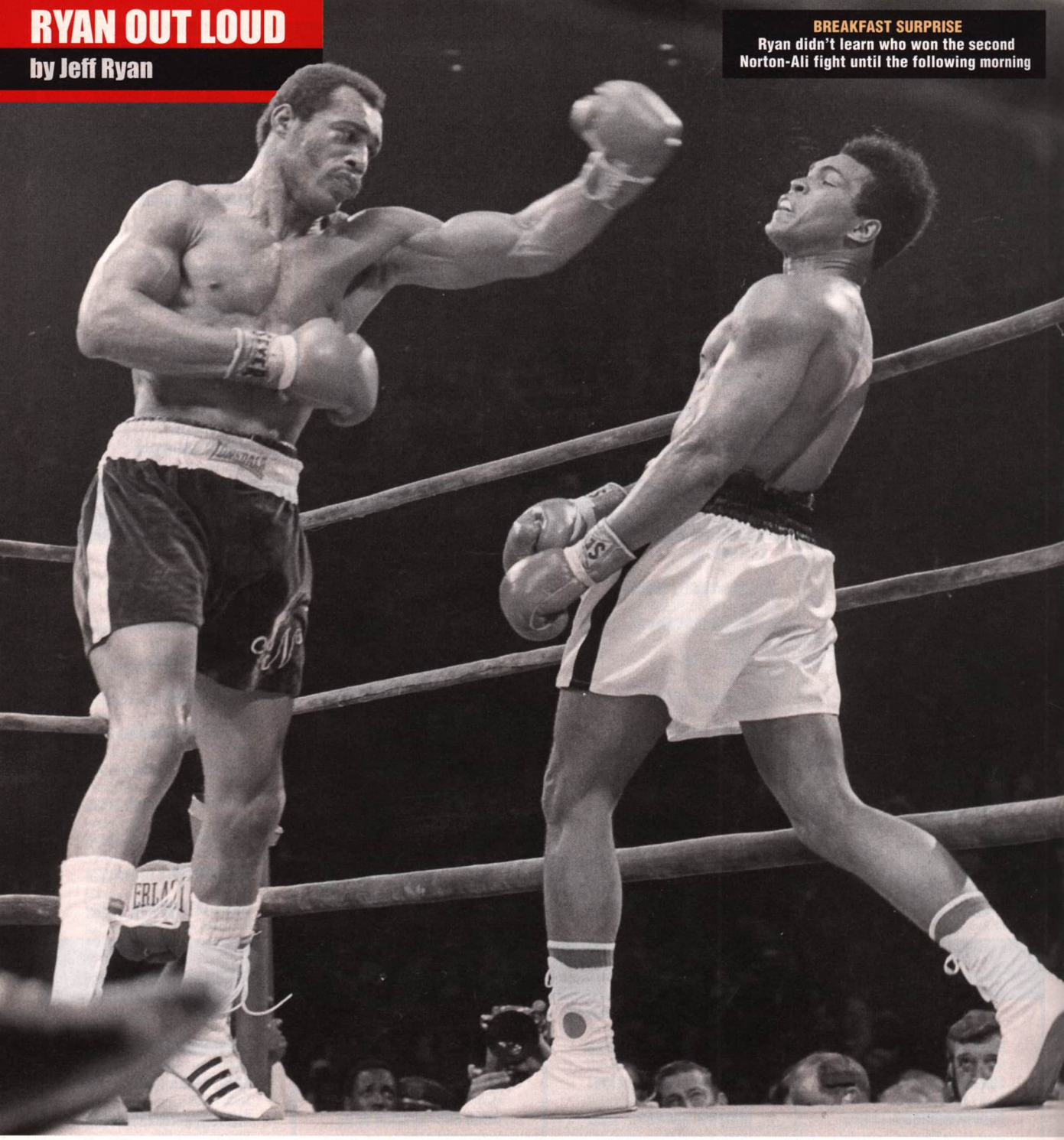
1. **IVAN CALDERON**
   Puerto Rico 34-1-1 (6)
2. **GILBERTO KEB BAAS**
   Mexico 34-20-4 (21)
3. **OMAR NINO**
   Mexico 30-4-2 (12)
4. **RODEL MAYOL**
   Philippines 27-5-2 (21)
5. **LUIS ALBERTO LAZARTE**
   Argentina 48-9-2 (18)
6. **CARLOS TAMARA**
   Colombia 21-6 (15)
7. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   Waipahu, HI 28-3 (16)
8. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 32-2-3 (21)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina 26-1 (15)
10. **JESUS GELES**
    Colombia 12-1-1 (5)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
   South Africa 21-0 (15)
2. **KAZUTO IOKA**
   Japan 7-0 (5)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand 35-1-1 (13)
4. **RAUL GARCIA**
   Mexico 29-1-1 (17)
5. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines 27-1-3 (15)
6. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines 25-5-1 (21)
7. **JUAN PALACIOS**
   Nicaragua 27-3 (21)
8. **DENVER CUELLO**
   Philippines 25-4-6 (15)
9. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan 24-4 (10)
10. **MICHAEL LANDERO**
    Philippines 14-4-4 (4)

by Jeff Ryan



BREAKFAST SURPRISE
Ryan didn't learn who won the second Norton-Ali fight until the following morning

Appreciating The Dark Ages

Let's get something straight right off the bat: My birth announcement wasn't written on parchment with a quill pen dipped in an inkwell, okay? I'm not so old that I can fondly recall leather football helmets, the two-handed set shot, or Citation's Triple Crown. I never saw Jesse Owens run, Sonja Henie skate, or Buster Crabbe swim. And when the Milwaukee Braves toppled the mighty Yankees in the '57 World Series, my pinstriped heart didn't break because I wasn't even conceived yet. Much like the Yanks when Lew Burdette was pitching, my father was having trouble getting past first base.

What I *am* old enough to remember, however, is an era in sports that elicits shakes of the head and disbelieving chuckles from my nephews, the college-age kids of my friends, and other young fans of athletic exploits when they hear me tell them about it. If my stories weren't so full of specific detail, they'd swear I was making them up.

My recollections are of NFL games being blacked out in the home team's market, even when the stadium was sold out. (Diehard New York Giants fans would drive to motels or bars in Connecticut that were outside the blackout radius.) Of watching Joe Namath's New York Jets win the AFL Championship and a trip to the Super Bowl not as it was happening on a Sunday afternoon, but at 11:30 that night, when NBC let the New York metropolitan area see the action on tape delay.

Speaking of tape delay, that's how the decisive Game Six of the 1980 NBA Finals was broadcast to most of the country by CBS. A series featuring Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Dr. J, for heaven's sake! But at least that contest could be seen. When a limping Willis Reed led the Knicks over the Lakers in that legendary seventh game in 1970, all we Knicks fans in New York and New Jersey got was a radiocast.

Then there was boxing. Someone like me, who grew up middle class and was just starting to understand, follow, and fall in love with the Sweet Science around the time of Muhammad Ali's comeback in 1970, looks at the boxing bounty bestowed on a young fight fan in the making today and absolutely marvels at it.

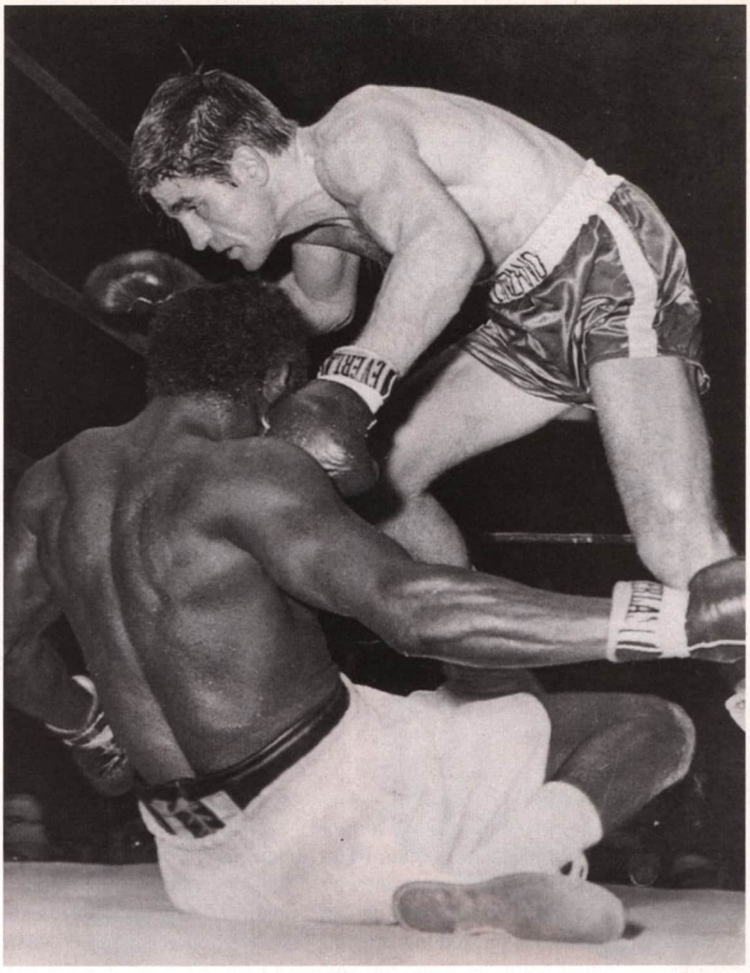
No, there isn't any boxing on the commercial-TV networks on Saturday afternoons or in prime time during Sweeps Week anymore. (Although promoter Bob Arum's decision to take Manny Pacquiao to Showtime could eventually lead to fights reappearing on CBS, the cable network's parent company.) But there are plenty of Grade A matchups on Showtime and HBO, fights aired everywhere from ESPN2 to Telemundo to the Internet, boxing talk shows on satellite radio, and more websites that you can shake a taped fist at. And self-serving though it may sound, it's nonetheless a fact that this publication is packed with more entertaining info per issue than at any time in its long history. In THE RING that I used to buy as a kid, you needed a microscope to read the agate type, the feature stories were drier than tumbleweed, and the only color was on the covers.

Today, the result of a fight from Thailand can be found online moments after the final bell. Heck, back in my day (now I *really* sound like an old guy), you often couldn't find out who won a battle in *Canada* until THE RING hit the stands and provided a barely adequate little roundup six weeks later. And yet, am I jealous? Do I think I was born too soon? Did I get gypped as a fight fan? Hell no.

The bare-bones experiences that shaped me as a boxing junkie may sound silly when compared to the information saturation of today, but they're *my* moments and thus are truly special to me. With a very limited allowance and a Korean War veteran dad who, let's just say, wasn't enthused with Ali's military stance, there wasn't much chance a preteen like me was going to get to see a closed-circuit telecast of Ali-Frazier I. My news bulletin: The outcome, "Frazier Unan. Dec." was scrawled on a small kitchen blackboard guaranteed to catch my eye when I woke up for school the next morning.

Once again broke and brought up to think that spending big bucks on closed-circuit was a waste of my limited funds, Ali-Frazier II and Ali-George Foreman unfolded for me in the darkness of my bedroom, listening to radio reports from Reuters after every round. The newscaster would describe the action, and I'd envision every punch. Compared to all the analysis, camera angles, replays, corner microphones, etc. on the average HBO telecast, it was life in the Stone Age. But believe me, it was dramatic in its own way.

And, oh, the torture and panic when the next round wasn't reported in the expected time frame. Did that mean that someone had scored a knockout and the radio station was awaiting specifics before reporting it? Or was it simply a case of the newsreader having to take a leak and not getting back quickly enough? Didn't the jerk realize he was raising my blood pressure before I even knew what blood pressure was?



NEXT-DAY COVERAGE
Ryan watched Benvenuti-Griffith on 24-hour tape delay

There was a big test scheduled for the day after Ali-Ken Norton II, so that meant an early night's sleep. I awoke the next morning certain of the outcome: Ali by mid-rounds knockout. Norton was a stiff, after all, and that broken jaw was a fluke. Then I turned on the radio and heard that it was Ali by *split* decision. And right then I knew that either the legend was beginning his decline, Norton was better than anyone thought, or both.

(During my fight-formative years, the limited home-TV coverage made every telecast we did get a treat. Nino Benvenuti-Emile Griffith on 24-hour tape delay? We'll take it. Jerry Quarry vs. undefeated Mac Foster turned up on a syndicated broadcast on lowbrow Channel 9 one night in '70, and I thought Santa Claus had come in June. Same with Quarry-Norton. When ABC's *Wide World Of Sports* showed replays of the Ali bouts, in most cases the Saturday following the fight, an earthquake wouldn't have been able to dislodge me from my spot on the living room floor.)

You know, it may seem strange, but all the fights I *didn't* see growing up did as much to turn me into a boxing enthusiast as all the bouts I saw. To me, those experiences as a budding fan don't seem inferior or incomplete, merely different. And you know what? Given the chance to relive that time again, to sit in a theater full of screaming crazies and actually witness the action, I think I'd still choose the solitude of my bedroom, where Ali wasn't just "The Greatest," but also "The Prince of Darkness," and that AM radio was my teddy bear. ■

HEADS COME TOGETHER The recent spate of head-butt-induced cuts continued with Jones-Soto Karass

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Skullduggery

In round 12 of their grueling blood-soaked rematch in Las Vegas, Mike Jones, clearly ahead on points anyway, gave Jesus Soto Karass something else to remember him by. He ducked low, making himself horizontal from the waist up, and, using the top of his head as a torpedo, launched it straight and fast into the groin of an opponent who was already half-blind from headbutt wounds.

We've seen lots of skull clashes lately, and they're not always an easy call. Even when you spot them, who's to say that split-second of bone-crushing contact was done on purpose? Everyone's innocent until proven guilty, right? But this time there was absolutely no way to dispute the foul. Jones might as well have yelled out "Geronimo!" Surely Kenny Bayless, considered one of the top referees in the world, would call the foul, right? Think again.

"Watch your heads," Bayless announced. A generic warning to both fighters because, hey, how do we know Soto Karass didn't purposely slam his nuts into Jones' cranium? And when a Libyan sniper shoots an unarmed little girl down in the street, can you really say for sure who's to blame? Maybe she initiated contact.

Head clashes are like sex scandals and celebrity arrests. They come in waves. It's obvious that instant replay ought to be employed in some of these instances, but, if officials don't start making some calls and victims don't start making those skull-crashing tactics backfire on their perpetrators, we can expect more of the same. We should also prepare for clean fighters to start practicing their own dirty tricks.

Getting repeatedly banged by an educated cranium is like being periodically dinged with a pipe wrench. You might try not to think about it, but it can get you off your game.

The dilemma was demonstrated front and center in the high-stakes battle between junior welters Devon Alexander and Tim Bradley. Clearly, Bradley outfought his opponent. But did he deserve his victory in light of that accidentally on purpose head-swinging style of his?

Alexander said he counted six butts. I counted four. The fact that he was counting at all shows that worrying about the next one affected Alexander's performance.

Except for the no-blame warning of "Watch your heads," I never saw Frank Garza caution Bradley. When I asked experienced referee Pat Russell about it, he agreed that Garza's style is "kind of let the boxer beware." But, he added, would a referee who interferes too much with the flow of the fight be an improvement?

"Why?" Russell asked, "didn't Alexander have a game plan in the beginning if he knew headbutts were going to be an issue? When Bradley drops his head and goes to the body bobbing and weaving, he's much more susceptible to lateral movement." He said Alexander should have stepped to the side and banged him on the ear. Going in there without a strategy to counter what you know will happen is inexcusable, Russell said, particularly in so crucial a contest.

When I asked for opinions around the Fabela Chavez Boxing Gym in Carson, California, everyone agreed that we'd witnessed a contest between "a boy and a man," as one regular put it. That is, Bradley, 27, understood what was involved in a fight of this magnitude and what it would take to win. And Alexander, not yet 24 that night, just wasn't as prepared as he thought. Neither was his corner.

MAGOOS

Magoo One

To Kenny Bayless, for reasons noted.

Magoo Two

To Max Kellerman, the Michael Vick of matchmaking. I let it go when Max suggested that smallish welter Manny Pacquiao take on hulking middleweight Sergio Martinez. But then, moments after his tremendous victory over Fernando Montiel, Max dared Nonito Donaire to jump two weight classes to number-one featherweight Juan Manuel Lopez. Why? The bantamweight division is deep and talented. It's foolish to imply that a man who campaigns in his own division is playing it safe.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

BLOODY MESS
Referee Bayless missed the headbutt that opened up Soto-Karsass' left eye

Pac-Man Tune-Up

MANNY AND SHANE
Relax, folks; it's just a tune-up

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

Why are so many otherwise rational folks boiling with frustration and anger over the Manny Pacquiao-Shane Mosley matchup? It's a tune-up, guys. They're a time-honored tradition, and it makes sense for the champ to occasionally take a little recess between more serious contests. Apparently what some people find confusing is the part of the tradition that compels everyone directly involved—fighters, trainers, etc.—to refuse to confess this is just a tune-up, folks.

Once we disregard the traditional blarney, we can enjoy the contest for what it is. It keeps Pacquiao from getting rusty, keeps his name out there, provides paydays for him and long-in-the-tooth Mosley, and gives fans the chance to see something interesting, though probably not spellbinding.

The problem with this particular tune-up is that clever promoter Bob Arum will make it earn far more than it's worth. You could say that's all part of the business, but this is like trying to extract pay-per-view dollars for an appearance on a late-night talk show. It won't earn much in the way of goodwill.

Still, at least no one can complain that Pac-Man didn't face Sugar Shane back in Sugar's prime. Seven years ago Mosley, age 32, was campaigning at junior middleweight. Pacquiao, then 25, was a featherweight. There never was a perfect point in time for their stars to cross. It's only possible now as the sun sinks beneath the horizon of Mosley's career.

But tune-up underdogs, usually in the biggest fight of their lives, sometimes refuse to go away quietly. And overwhelming favorites sometimes find it difficult to train hard for a lesser opponent. Mix the recipe just right, sneak a little taste with the fickle finger of fate, and, some night, the Pirates will beat the Giants. Maybe even Buster Douglas will knock out Mike Tyson.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

CHRIS' CRIME

Come on, ESPN2 guys (that means you, Brian Kenney), Chris Arreola meant no disrespect when he pecked Joey Abell on the cheek after stopping him in the first round. Maybe you've been watching Floyd Mayweather too long. Not every word and gesture is made with hostile intentions, and no animals were harmed in the making of this smooch.

BAD VENUES

PHOTO BY TIM SNOW/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

AGBEKO VS. MARES
This match deserves a better venue

When the final bouts of the Showtime bantamweight tournament are fought April 23 in Los Angeles, the ring will sit on the auditorium stage of the Nokia Theatre with most seats on one side of the action. Not an ideal setup for fans in attendance.

The matchups themselves are excellent—slam-banging Joseph Agbeko against rising star Abner Mares for all the marbles and Vic Darchinyan versus Yonnhy Perez in a potential barnburner of a consolation bout. This is standard fare these days: a worthy card in a not so worthy setting.

Old boxing venues are crumbling, and lots of cities, L.A. among them, are running out of good places to hold fights. So too often they're set in makeshift auditoriums, ballrooms, and even standing-room nightclubs.

Compare this to pro football, where spoiled owners in city after city have everything, including their stadiums, handed to them by gullible politicians. And if the team stinks and the owner has no remedy, what the heck, they all share the TV money.

Almost next door to the Nokia Theatre sits a prospective site for a stadium designed to lure an NFL team back to town. The mayor has endorsed a complicated deal that would require his city to borrow $350 million to make it happen.

If boxing, as we hear so often, is the red light district of organized sports, where does that put the NFL?

Probably somewhere across the River Styx.

Targeting The Hip

As Pat Russell dissected Bradley-Alexander for me, he recalled the night he took a point from Rafael Marquez for hitting low in his third fight with Israel Vazquez. Russell took a lot of flak for it later. Vazquez won by split decision, and, were it not for that point, the fight would have been a draw. As Russell explained his thinking to me, it said quite a lot about just how intricate the Sweet Science can get and why there are times you have to look a little deeper into things than you might expect:

"Marquez was hitting him on the hip, which is very painful [and illegal]. To avoid that pain Vazquez was moving his hip back just enough to make him susceptible to a [legal] left hook. I'm just talking about a couple inches here. But if I hadn't done something about it, Marquez would have been doing that all night. Nacho Beristain was in Marquez's corner. You think they didn't know exactly what they were doing? That is boxing at a rarified level."

Chemical Capers

Ever notice that Mosley, who admitted his steroid use to a grand jury, and James Toney, who tested positive for steroids on two occasions, look like shoo-ins for the Hall of Fame? The day Don King was inducted—a promoter who cheated fighters and got caught at it—the Hall of Fame might as well have spelled it out: It has no morals clause.

Meanwhile Mark McGwire, who finally admitted taking performance-enhancing drugs after years of dodging questions, will no doubt remain outside the fence peeping through baseball's Hall of Fame knothole. Along with Pete Rose, banned for betting on games and then lying about it.

Who's right? Boxing or baseball? What do you think? ■

Ivan Goldman can be contacted at ivangoldman@yahoo.com.

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY STEVE BABINEAU/NHLI/ VIA GETTY IMAGES

1. PUCK OF THE IRISH
If either the Boston Bruins or Detroit Red Wings are in the market for an enforcer, they've found their man—provided Micky Ward can skate. The subject of the Oscar-nominated movie *The Fighter* dropped the puck at a February game at the TD Garden in Boston, and, though Ward looked a bit undersized in between Bruins captain Zdeno Chara and Red Wings captain Nicklas Lidstrom, you can bet neither of these guys wanted his sweater pulled over his head by "Irish Micky."

2. TOUGH LOVE
By the look on Don George's face, this kiss from a beautiful woman is not nearly as enjoyable as it ought to be. Perhaps he's upset because her full-body embrace ruined the postfight application of the baseball cap, a key element of any victory celebration. Whatever the case, he's taking more abuse in this photo than he did in the entirety of his win over previously unbeaten Cornelius White, a fight that lasted all of 122 seconds.

3. ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR
Manny Pacquiao doesn't get enough credit for his prefight mental warfare tactics, but this is pretty brilliant, smooching with his wife at the Valentine's Day press conference for his fight against recently divorced Shane Mosley. About the only way this could have been worse for Sugar Shane is if his ex-wife Jin popped out of that cake and also starting making out with Manny.

4. A SIMPLE REQUEST
Hey, ladies, you see that picture of Jinkee and Manny Pacquiao right nearby? See what they're doing? Move a little closer … A little closer …

5. SHADOW BOXING
Ladies and gentlemen, it's time to play everyone's favorite game, guess that mystery fighter! Looking almost like the Grim Reaper as he stands in the shadows, British junior featherweight Jason Booth prepares to make his way to the ring for a February fight with Jamie Arthur. This was without a doubt the best silhouetted entrance by a British fighter since Naseem Hamed's American debut—and thankfully, Booth's entrance didn't take nearly as long.

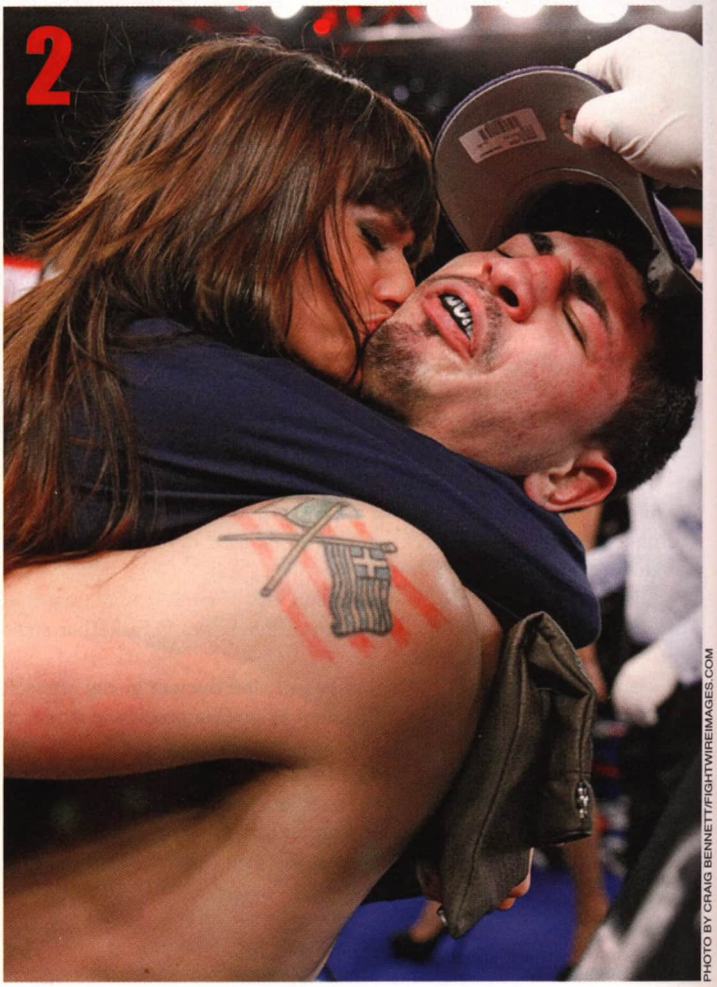


PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

PHOTO BY CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

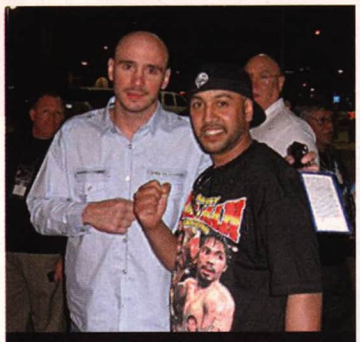
PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

PHOTO BY DEAN MOUNTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

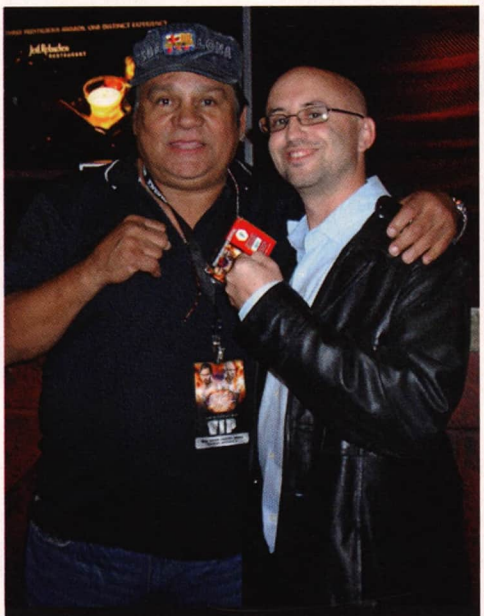
AT THE FIGHTS

WANT TO SEE YOURSELF IN THE RING MAGAZINE?

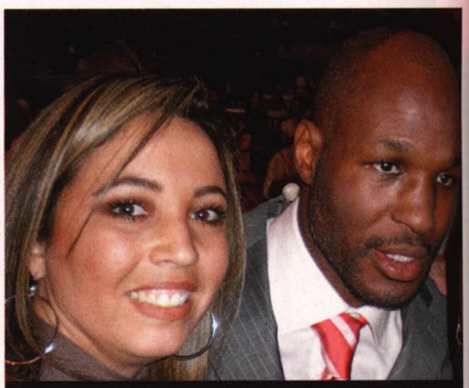
Send us your photos from a fight with you posing next to a celebrity, athlete, or other famous person and we will consider it for publication in the magazine. Send photos to celebrityphotos@sepublications.com. Make sure to include your name(s), the celebrity name(s), the fight attended, and your contact information. See you at the fights!



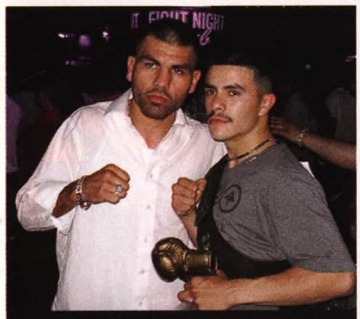
Kelly Pavlik and Sammy Al-saidi at Pacquiao-Clottey



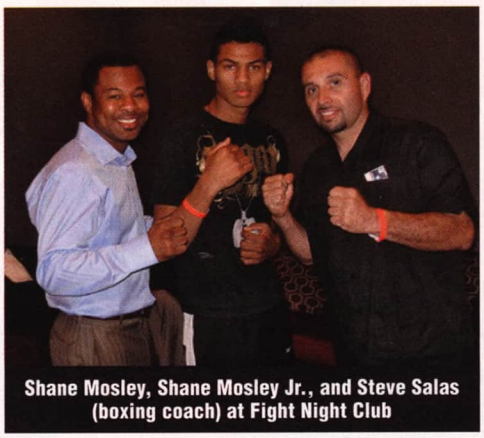
Roberto Duran and Chris Ley at Pacquiao-Cotto



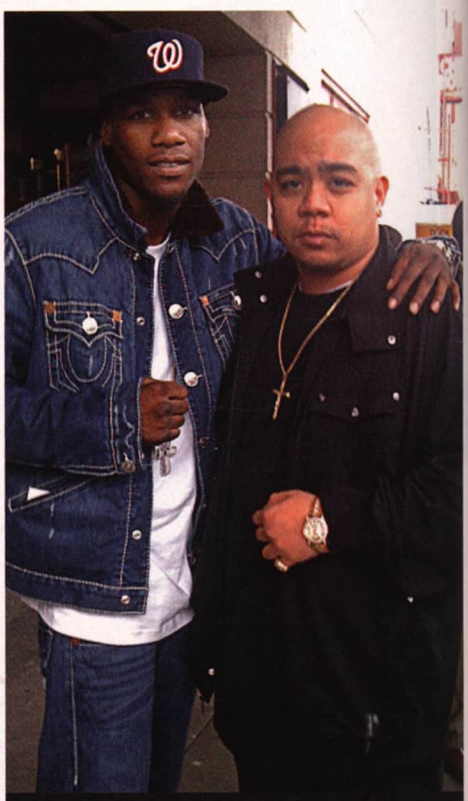
Bernard Hopkins and Candi Muro at "Lightweight Lightning"



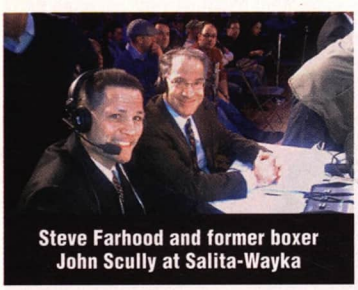
Alfredo Angulo and amateur boxer Jose Iniguez at Fight Night Club



Shane Mosley, Shane Mosley Jr., and Steve Salas (boxing coach) at Fight Night Club

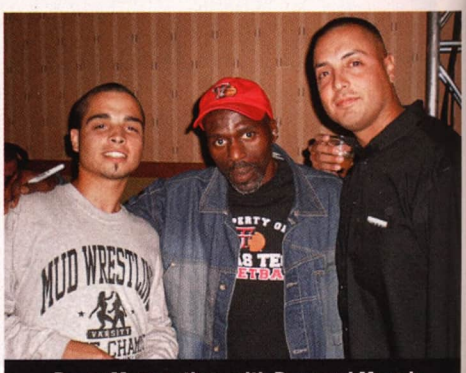


Paul Williams and Mark Anglo at Mayweather-Mosley Press Conference in Washington, D.C.



Steve Farhood and former boxer John Scully at Salita-Wayka

Freddie Roach and Jason Tremble at "In Harm's Way"



Roger Mayweather, with Raymond Muro Jr. and Edgar Castillo, at Pechanga Casino

The RING **CARD GIRL OF THE MONTH**

Photos by Anthony Golston Photography • www.anthonygolston.com

Dominica Westling

Tale of the Tape

Height: 5'4"
Weight: 110
Measurements: 34-22-34
Stance: Orthodox

Reach: 25"
Favorite Fighter: Floyd Mayweather
Hometown: Uppsala, Sweden
Current Location: Los Angeles

Where you've seen her: *Joan & Melissa: Joan Knows Best?* (WEtv), Coca-Cola National Billboard Campaign, Music Video "Stay Up" by Kanye West and 88-Keys, *FHM Magazine*, *Maxim Magazine*

Wow! A real, live Swedish bikini model ... pinch me.
You wish! *(laughs)* I'm a lot more than a bikini model!

Really. How so?
Well, for starters, I have a O-1 Visa that is for people with "Extraordinary Abilities."

And what are these "extraordinary abilities?" Wait, maybe you shouldn't answer that.
Take it easy, buddy. I have a national TV show on WEtv about the lives of Melissa and Joan Rivers. I've been featured in a video with Kanye West and 88-Keys. I've co-starred in a movie with Tom Sizemore. I'm a certified personal trainer. And...

Okay, I get it. You're an extraordinary person. How did you end up in LA?
I started modeling in London, then moved to Miami, and finally came to Los Angeles a few years ago at the suggestion of my agent.

That's a lot of moving; was it hard?
Not really. I seem to make friends quickly wherever I go.

I can't imagine why.
You'd be surprised how many Swedes there are in the States, especially in LA.

Really! Is there a secret Eden in Beverly Hills where Swedish models go to frolic on weekends?
Actually, when I first moved to LA, I stayed in a mansion rented for six other Swedish models participating in a reality show. I had interviewed with the producer, and he thought I would enjoy living with them while the show was filming.

Seven Swedish models with nothing to do but work on their tans in a Hollywood mansion? Sounds terrible.
(laughs) Seriously! I swear that on every warm sunny day, there were at least three helicopters that flew over the pool area to check us out sunbathing.

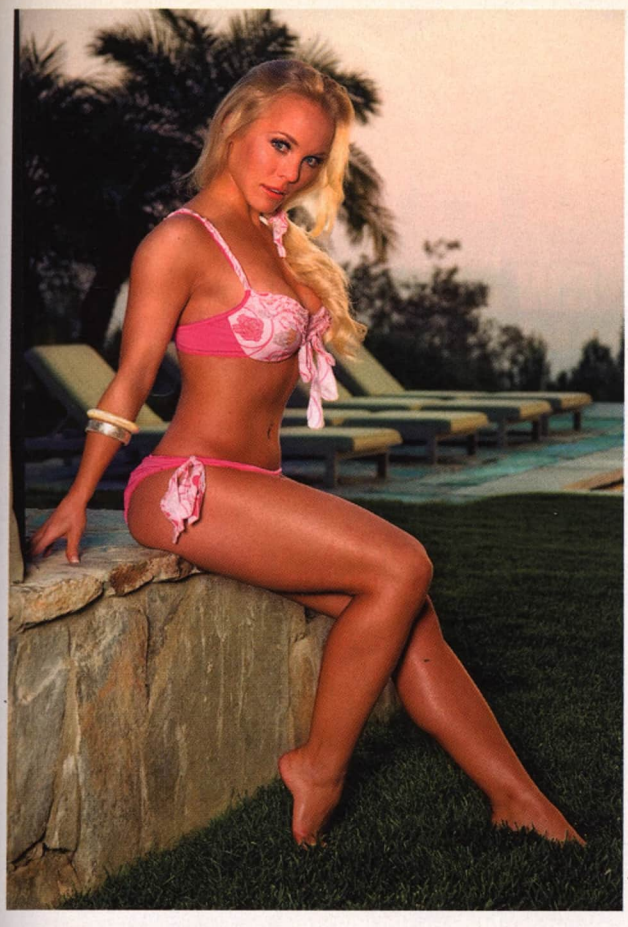
How long have you been a ring card girl?
I started in London as one of the Hayemaker Girls for David Haye. I did a few MMA events in Miami, but it was kinda gross so I stopped doing that. But when I moved to LA, there were a lot of boxing events so I started doing boxing again.

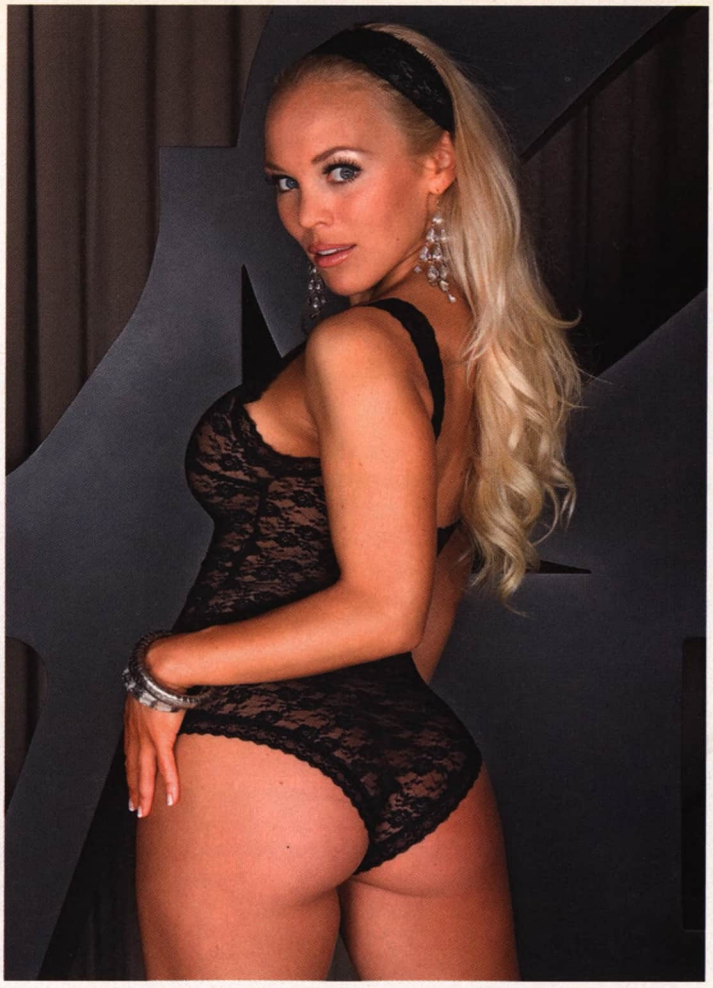
Good for you. Any memorable fights?
Well, I just started doing boxing again and was recently working the fight at Staples Center in September. I remember the fight with the red-headed guy.

Saul "Canelo" Alvarez.
Yes! That fight was so exciting! Everyone was going nuts, and David Arquette bumped into me after the fight when everyone was trying to get past us and into the ring. We laughed. It was pretty funny.

Sounds like fun. So how do people get in touch with you if they want to book you for something?
Please contact my agency Ragaza LC Models at www.ragazalcmodels.com, www.ragazas.net, lcmodel@gmail.com, or (818) 679-8766.

Thank you so much for your time.
You are very welcome.





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THE "WOW" FACTOR!

Donaire Might Not Be The New Pacquiao, But Comparisons Are Unavoidable

By Mike Rosenthal

A split second after Nonito Donaire's chilling second-round knockout of Fernando Montiel on February 19 in Las Vegas, images from the past came rushing back.

A gifted Filipino lands an epic left to the head that leaves his opponent a useless heap on the canvas as his breathless countrymen in the crowd cheer wildly and cynical boxing writers at ringside are left speechless.

And the wider boxing world, craving the rare fighter who can capture the imagination, fawns unashamedly over the young star even days after the fact.

That scenario applies not only to Donaire but also to Manny Pacquiao, who stopped Ricky Hatton in almost the exact same way in the same round and in the same city two years ago.

Thus, the comparisons are inevitable. But are they fair? In some ways no, and, in some ways, yes.

Pacquiao has done things in boxing that are unfathomable. He has won titles in eight weight classes, almost half of the 17 in existence. His list of victims reads like a Hall of Fame, where many will end up. Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, Juan Manuel Marquez, Oscar De La Hoya, and Miguel Cotto are the best of them.

Then there's his story, a dirt-poor street urchin who finds boxing and then ends up in the US. Then, with the help of trainer Freddie Roach and promoter Bob Arum, he becomes the best fighter in the world, a multi-millionaire and ultimately a congressman in his beloved country. That's a movie, not a life.

And finally there is the uncommon grace and humility with which he carries himself, character traits that touch everyone he encounters. He has become royalty in and out of the ring, a god-like figure in the Philippines and an international icon.

That's why Pacquiao could draw 100,000 spectators to two fights at cavernous Cowboys Stadium outside Dallas, while Donaire-Montiel, a very big fight, drew less than 5,000 to the arena at Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino.

And that's why Pacquiao has earned as much as $100-million in his career while Donaire hasn't made $1-million, even after his $350,000 purse for the Montiel fight.

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

Donaire understands that a Pacquiao comes along once in a generation, if that. This is one fight in which he can't compete.

"Manny Pacquiao is the best fighter in the world, the best of his era," said Donaire, exhibiting humility similar to that of the man he was describing. "I don't mind being number two. I'm going to just keep doing the best I can to beat the best out there. I don't care who is on top as long as I do that.

"At the end of my career, as long as I've performed to the best of my ability, I'll be happy."

Robert Garcia, the trainer of Donaire and recent Pacquiao victim Antonio Margarito, spoke of Pacquiao with similar reverence in terms of his accomplishments.

"Pacquiao has done amaaaaaazing things," he said.

Then he shifted the conversation to boxing skills, which allowed him to compare the icon to his fighter with only a small degree of awkwardness.

"It sounds ... maybe it's too soon to be saying ... if you're talking only about skills, Nonito is probably as skillful or more skillful than Pacquiao," said Garcia, proud that he got the words out. "Pacquiao has a style. He throws a lot of punches and basically freezes his opponents. That's how he beats everybody.

"He throws 100 punches a round, so fast and so strong. His offense is his defense. That's what makes him so good."

And Donaire?

"Nonito stands in front of his opponent," Garcia said. "He has good foot work, good reflexes where he can counter and land a good two-, three-punch combination. Nonito studies his opponents, makes them miss, hits them, moves side-to-side, lands uppercuts.

"He does everything. I'm telling you: This guy's got skills."

We didn't get to see too much of Donaire's skills on February 19.

He and Montiel spent the first five minutes of the fight in a spirited chess match, boxing fairly cautiously as they tried to figure one another out as the crowd—evenly divided among anxious Mexicans and Filipinos—screamed at anything resembling an effective punch.

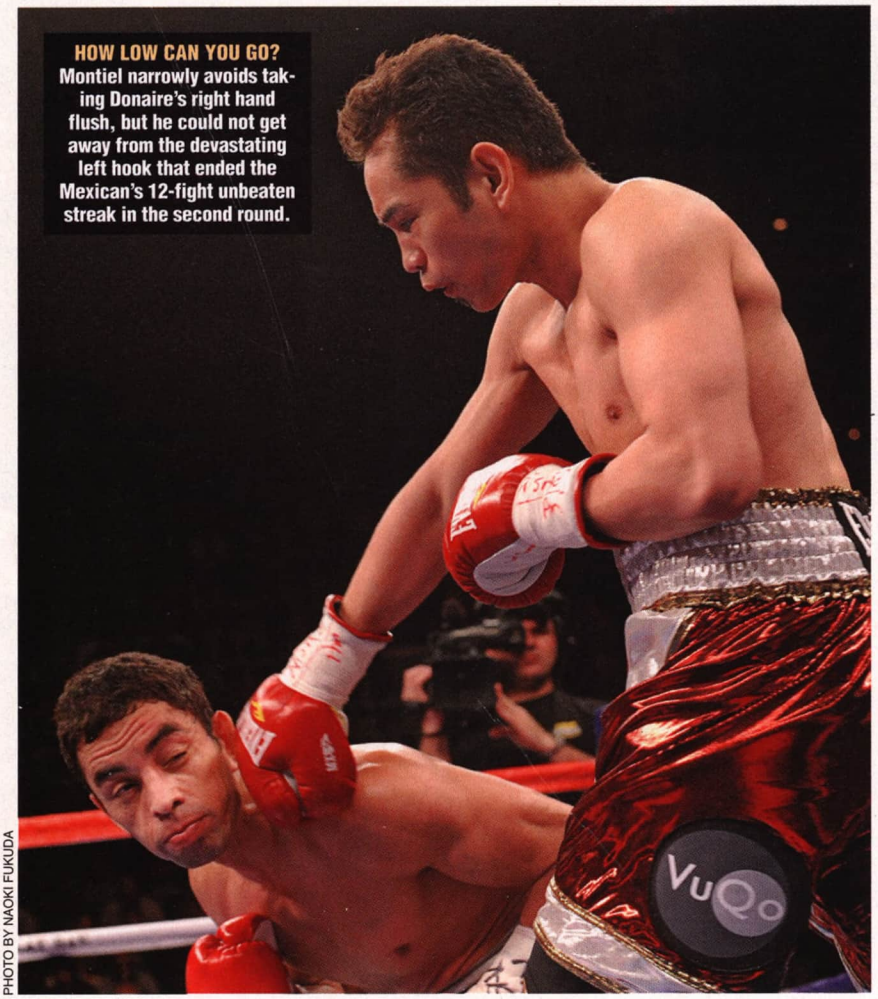
(The two landed a combined 31 punches by the end of the brief fight, according to CompuBox stats, but that figure seemed somewhat high.)

Then, with 57 seconds remaining in the second round, Montiel threw a right that grazed the head of Donaire, and, seizing his moment, Donaire countered with a left hook that deposited Montiel on his back and sent the crowd into hysterics. A collective "Ohhhhhhhhhh" filled the arena.

Donaire jumped up and down while Montiel's legs twitched on the ground and fans roared, a bizarre but dramatic scene that made the heart race.

Montiel, in a testament to his courage and conditioning, was able to get to his feet before the 10-count ended and continued fighting for a few seconds. A disbelieving

DISCOMBOBULATED
Montiel crumbles at Donaire's feet after being struck with what the "Filipino Flash" said was the hardest punch he's ever thrown. That's referee Russell Mora rushing in to direct Donaire to a neutral corner.



HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?
Montiel narrowly avoids taking Donaire's right hand flush, but he could not get away from the devastating left hook that ended the Mexican's 12-fight unbeaten streak in the second round.

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Donaire pounced on his prey and landed a left and then a right, prompting referee Russell Mora to step in.

The official end came at 2:25, 34 seconds before Pacquiao stopped Hatton.

The circumstances of the two fights weren't identical. For example, Hatton, also put on his back, barely moved when the fight ended. Montiel got up. Donaire, probably more emotional than Pacquiao, celebrated more vociferously. And the Pacquiao crowd, about four times larger at the MGM Grand, created a more-deafening din.

The feeling at ringside was remarkably similar, though, a strange sensation of déjà vu.

Moments after it was clear that Hatton wouldn't get up, with Pacquiao's fans going nuts, those at ringside looked at one another and searched for words that didn't immediately come. Everyone was in awe.

The knockout itself was so dramatic, particularly given Montiel's accomplishments, that it was bound to have a jarring impact on us. There was, however, more to it than that. It became clear immediately that we saw both a special performance and special perform-ER. Donaire had instantly entered an exclusive realm, one occupied by the likes of Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather.

"It was clearly a star-making performance," one knowledgeable observer said.

Pacquiao had already become a star with his victory over De La Hoya, which preceded the Hatton fight. He would go on to win titles in two more weight classes and an election in the Philippines, sealing his place among the legendary figures in the sport.

Donaire could claim only two defining victories, over Vic Darchinyan in 2007 and Montiel. And, with the two bantamweight belts he claimed against Montiel, he now has won major titles in all of two weight classes.

Again, no comparison.

The victory clearly was the start of something significant though. The energy generated by Donaire's punch hovered in the arena long after the fight ended. The

I WON!
Members of Donaire's team hoist him into the air moments after the Montiel fight was stopped. The spectacular victory also lifted his status in the division and pound-for-pound ratings.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

WINNING COMBINATION
Donaire and trainer Robert Garcia couldn't keep the grins off their faces after Montiel was so quickly conquered. Garcia believes that Nonito "is probably as skillful or more skillful than Pacquiao."

knockout received good play on a variety of sports TV news shows.

The fans, mostly in the Philippines or of Filipino descent, devoured anything they could read about the event on the Internet. For example, the number of hits on RingTV.com's fight-night story and reader comments that accompanied it was unprecedented, surpassing even Pacquiao's fights. They don't seem to care that Donaire was born in the Philippines but raised in the San Francisco area.

Everywhere you went people asked, "Did you see that knockout?"

Donaire was taken aback by it all. Immediately after the fight, at the postfight news conference, he expressed gratitude.

"I just want to enjoy this moment, to soak it all in," he told THE RING, an indelible smile on his face. "I'm grateful for everything, I really am. I feel like I'm getting better every time I fight. It's really a blessing."

And two days later, still in a blissful fog, he must've uttered the word "wow" 10 times when reminded how his deed had reverberated in the sport and beyond.

"When I'm out of the ring, I have a different mentality," he said. "In the ring, I'm very confident. I knew it was going to happen, and it did. Now that I've cooled down, though, I'm the regular me. Now I'm asking myself, *Wow, did that happen?*

"We had to look at [the Internet on] our phones to know that it was real. I'm thinking, *Wow, wow, wow. Are you kidding me?*"

Does this mean Donaire is the next Pacquiao? No.

Once again, Pacquiao was the perfect storm, a humble but charming young man with uncommon ability who found the right people to guide his career and arrived on the scene at the perfect time, as De La Hoya's was declining.

And one more thing: He was the first true international superstar from his country, which gives him an extremely special place in the hearts of his people.

The Filipinos apparently have room for more than one hero even if no one could ever supplant Pacquiao.

And that love figures to blossom further as Donaire continues his career. He has big dreams—an undisputed championship, titles in two, three, four more weight classes and, yes, the fame and fortune that goes with it.

He probably won't reach the unheard of heights Pacquiao reached, but superstar is not out of the question, particularly since Pacquiao expects to fight only three or four more times before leaving the sport.

And who is one of the principal people Donaire thanks for having the opportunity to become such a special fighter? Why Pacquiao, of course.

Donaire had trouble getting his career off the ground for many years, in part, it is presumed, because it was difficult to promote Filipino fighters in the US. Well, it's not difficult any more.

"Manny pretty much opened the door for other Filipino fighters," Donaire said. "And it was more than that for me. I had an issue with self-esteem, about what I could do. I never doubted my athletic ability, but I asked myself: *Do I have the heart? Am I brave enough?* Then I saw someone with the humble beginnings that Manny had and what he accomplished, and it inspired me.

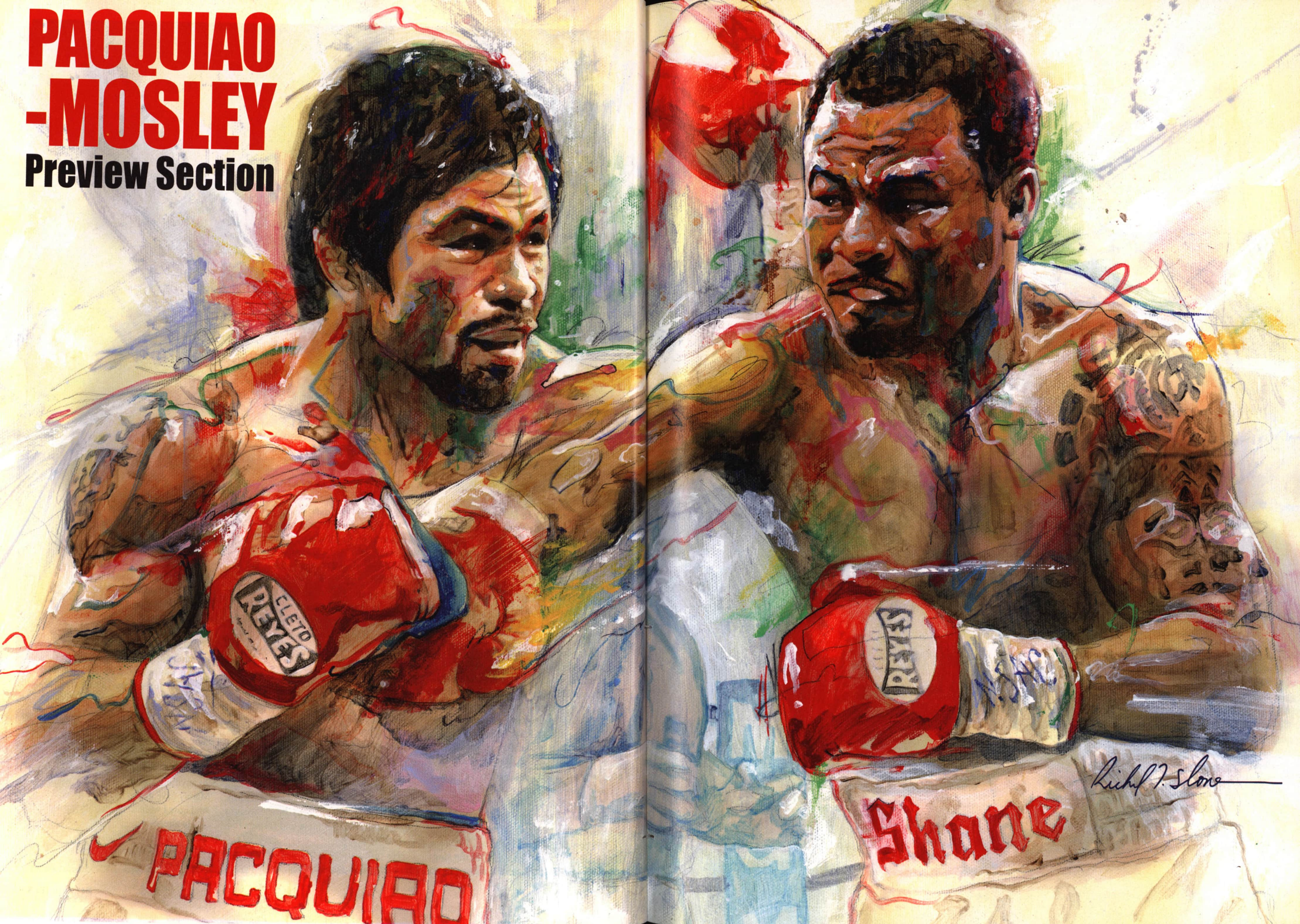
"Now I have the mentality that I could do anything I want as long as I try my best. Manny gave that to me. He's my inspiration. And now I want to inspire other people."

He already has. ■

Michael Rosenthal is the co-editor of RingTV.com

PACQUIAO -MOSLEY

Preview Section



MOSLEY vs. PACQUIAO

10 Burning Questions

By Eric Raskin

Sometimes, bigger is better. Other times, bigger is just, well, bigger.

Manny Pacquiao vs. Shane Mosley is the biggest fight of the first half of 2011. It is not the best fight of the first half of 2011—not even close. Depending on what Top Rank does with the undercard, there's a good chance it won't even be the best fight taking place at the MGM Grand on May 7, 2011. Pacquiao and Mosley are both superstars, the fight will garner 24/7 coverage (or perhaps we should say 360° coverage instead), and everyone involved will collect a handsome payday. But it doesn't make you any less of a fight fan if you just can't get excited for this showdown.

In fact, it might make you less of a fight fan if you are excited for Pacquiao vs. Mosley. To be pumped up for this one, you probably need to have missed both of Sugar Shane's in-ring performances in 2010. He had one good round against Floyd Mayweather, but was otherwise disarmed with startling ease. Then he returned to "action" with a stinker against Sergio Mora in which hugs were exchanged during the fight and sisters were kissed afterward. A year ago, Mosley, 46-6-1 (39) with 1 no-contest, was thought to be a young 38; now he's an old 39. And since Pacquiao, 52-3-2 (38), is still kicking ass as the pound-for-pound king, what would have been a superfight 12 months ago is now being derided as a mismatch.

Still, the fight is happening, like it or not, and it is a big deal. So it demands to be analyzed. And even if "Who will win?" is not the hot topic we'd like it to be, there's no shortage of intriguing questions surrounding the Pacquiao-Mosley showdown. Here are 10 worth exploring:

MANNY PACQUIAO
BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

SHANE MOSLEY
BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

1. If styles make fights, shouldn't Pacquiao-Mosley be better than Mayweather-Mosley and Mosley-Mora because Manny comes to fight?

No question about it, Mayweather places more emphasis on defense than offense, and Mora is a shifty son of a gun (or, if you're not into euphemisms, a "runner"). Pacquiao is an offense-first guy. He's only had one fight in the last decade that you would dare call "boring," and that was because his opponent, Joshua Clottey, simply wasn't making any effort to win. (And even so, many observers found Pacquiao's one-man show to be moderately entertaining.)

So, yes, stylistically, Pacquiao-Mosley holds some promise. Even though Mosley's style is very different than Antonio Margarito's style, the principle here is the same as it was in Pacquiao-Margarito: The action should be pleasing while the drama might be sorely lacking. You will get your money's worth in terms of punches landed. You just have to be comfortable with the likelihood that one fighter will land twice as many of them as the other.

2. Can Mosley's hand speed still pose problems for Pacquiao since Pacquiao has mostly been dominating guys who are much slower than he is?

Pacquiao's reign of terror since his rematch against Juan Manuel Marquez three years has been breathtaking. But think about the respective hand speed of the six men he's beaten. David Diaz, Ricky Hatton, Miguel Cotto, Clottey, and Margarito are all mediocre at best in that department. Oscar De La Hoya had quick fists for most of his career, but, by the time he fought Pacquiao in the final fight of his career, his reflexes were shot. There's not much you can criticize about Pac-Man's recent resume, but one thing you have to wonder about is whether fighting bigger, slower men has flattered to deceive ever so slightly.

In his prime, Mosley was one of the fastest fighters on the planet. He's not anymore. He might possess the best hand speed of anyone Pacquiao has fought since leaving the junior lightweight division, but that's not saying an awful lot. Sugar Shane will still be at a distinct

EVASIVE TARGET
Sergio Mora was quick and slick enough to avoid trading punches with Mosley on a regular basis, but that should not be a problem against Pacquiao, who is always eager to mix it up.

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

EASY TARGET
Pacquiao will find Mosley significantly quicker than foes such as Antonio Margarito (pictured) and Joshua Clottey.

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

speed disadvantage. And in his last two fights, against Mayweather and Mora, he had serious problems pulling the trigger and taking advantage of openings.

So, yes, a quick-fisted fighter might make Pacquiao look a lot more human than he has of late. Mosley, however, is not that fighter anymore—at least not for more than just a couple of brief moments per fight.

3. Is Mosley just collecting a paycheck, or will he go in believing he can win despite his last two performances?

Don't confuse the public's lack of confidence in a fighter with that fighter's lack of confidence in himself. That's something that Mosley very specifically reminded us of when many observers feared for his health against Margarito, and Sugar Shane proceeded to dominate every aspect of the fight.

Typically, if a fighter doesn't have it anymore, he lives in denial for a little while and convinces himself he can still beat anybody. Exactly how much Mosley has left is uncertain. But chances are that whatever the amount in his tank is, it's a little higher than that in his mind.

That being said, Mosley is divorced and has four children, and, if you've read the details of some of the payments he has to make every month, you know this paycheck is not insignificant to him. Every boxer (except Mayweather, apparently) wants to fight the sport's cash cow, even those who know they can't win. Mosley, however, has been too successful in the prize ring for too long to place himself in that "I can't win" category just yet. Unless he has an absolutely horrible training camp, Sugar Shane will still believe in himself at the opening bell. Whether he'll believe in himself three or six minutes later remains to be seen.

4. Is there danger of Pacquiao having a letdown by taking Mosley lightly and believing in his own greatness a little too much?

It seems this threat is constantly lurking with Pacquiao. Earlier in his career, he had occasional minor fights for which he undertrained (Oscar Larios, Jorge Solis, Serikzhan Yeshmagambetov), and ,though that hasn't happened in a while, the Filipino congressman is undoubtedly more distracted than ever. At some point, his political career and his appearance schedule are going to put a meaningful dent in his training. Trainers Freddie Roach and Alex Ariza worried out loud that it was happening prior to the Margarito fight, but, in the end, everything came together. That doesn't mean it won't happen in Pacquiao's next fight.

The question is whether Mosley is a big enough name and the fight is a big enough event to force Pacquiao to overlook the perception that the fight will be easy. The guess here is that the magnitude of the occasion will indeed keep Pacquiao focused. And the reality is that Pacquiao doesn't have a huge ego. He knows that he's a special fighter, but he also knows that he's mortal (even if the rest of us sometimes doubt that). Add in the fact that he understands what his winning means to the Filipino people, and a letdown just doesn't seem likely on this night.

5. Will the punches Pacquiao took against big, strong opponents like Cotto and Margarito start to catch up with him in this fight?

Pacquiao only lost about two rounds combined against those powerful adversaries, but his brilliance and dominance shouldn't mask the reality that he absorbed his share of solid shots. And at a certain point, when enough heavy-handed fighters a weight class or two bigger than you have lashed you with leather, the cumulative result becomes significant.

However, usually cracks appear before the house tumbles down. It's not unheard of for a boxer to hit the wall overnight, but, most of the time, he ages in stages and not all at once. You'd expect Pacquiao to look slightly worn down first, then severely depleted a fight or two later. And we haven't seen any indication yet that he's lost a half step. His performance against Margarito last November was one of the most dazzling of his career.

So it seems far-fetched to suggest we'll see profound signs of wear against Mosley. Perhaps the first little cracks will appear in the ring at the MGM Grand. But it would be shocking to see Pacquiao's legs, reflexes, or punch resistance vanish without some warning signs first.

6. Does winning this fight enhance Pacquiao's legacy?

Because legacy is usually measured years or even decades down the road, yes. With the passage of time, observers will forget that Mosley was 39 years old and winless in his prior two bouts, but

CHIN MUSIC
Although he won a 12-round unanimous decision by a wide margin, Pacquiao took considerable punishment against Margarito. Will all the heavy blows absorbed when fighting bigger men catch up with "Pac-Man" against Mosley?

PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

HEAD TWISTER
After 53 pro fights, Mosley has taken a lot of hard shots, such as this right hand from Mora. Could a bad beating inflicted by Pacquiao end Sugar Shane's Hall of Fame career?

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

they'll know that he was among the best of his era. And that enhances Pacquiao's legacy. It's a legacy that's already quite secure, but it never hurts to have one more Hall of Fame name on the dossier.

The possibility of Pacquiao immediately enhancing his legacy is also in play—if he knocks Mosley out. Nobody has ever stopped Sugar Shane. In fact, Vernon Forrest remains the only fighter ever to put him on the canvas. So if Pacquiao earns the kayo, that is a meaningful achievement no matter how far from his prime Mosley currently is.

7. What impact will Showtime/CBS' involvement have on the event/promotion?

From the very moment it was announced that Showtime would produce and distribute the pay-per-view instead of HBO, it had the immediate impact of getting people talking about something other than the questionable quality of the in-ring matchup. That, however, will have mostly faded by fight time.

The real question is how much attention can a fight gain by having one documentary-style preview special air in prime time on CBS and by having commercials for the fight aired during major sporting events such as the NCAA basketball tournament? Can that exposure add hundreds of thousands of PPV sales? Or are we only talking about tens of thousands? Unfortunately, we'll never know the answer because there's no "control" in the form of a Pacquiao-Mosley fight on HBO PPV to compare it to. What we know is that Pacquiao-Margarito drew 1.15 million buys. So it's fair to say that if the Mosley fight does similar numbers, the CBS exposure was largely irrelevant (at least in the short term), but, if the Mosley fight hits 1.5 million buys or more, CBS' impact on this promotion was dramatic.

As for the event itself, it shouldn't feel terribly different from an HBO production except for one thing: Gus Johnson. If the excitable Showtime blow-by-blow man thought Andre Dirrell was a special fighter, his enthusiasm over watching Pacquiao work his magic might blow out the speakers on your television.

8. Is it in Pacquiao's best interest to carry Mosley and underperform in hopes of luring Mayweather in?

Most of us perceive Mosley as a safe opponent for Pacquiao, but he's not exactly Hernan Marquez, the guy Nonito Donaire fought last year on Showtime when he decided to play around in a southpaw stance for four rounds. Sugar Shane is still dangerous. He can do damage. (See round two of the Mayweather fight.) This isn't the right opponent for Pacquiao to fool around with. If he lets Mosley hang around and get some confidence, disaster might be one punch away.

There's something to be said for tanking a little bit and artificially boosting Mayweather's confidence that he can beat Pacquiao, but it's not worth the risk. Pacquiao wants that fight, but he doesn't need it. If he felt he needed it, he would have caved to all of Mayweather's drug-testing demands the first time around. Pac-Man can make $20-million fighting anyone at this point, so while he'd like to make double that (or possibly more) in one night, he's not exactly in a position where he needs to do anything desperate.

WRAPPING THINGS UP
What are the chances of the Pacquiao-Mosley winner fighting Floyd Mayweather for The Ring welterweight championship? Moreover, if Mayweather is still inactive, perhaps a bout with Andre Berto could be for the 147-pound crown.

PHOTO BY TED ALJIBE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

9. Will Pacquiao end Mosley's career?

This is the toughest question to answer of the 10 we've posed. In this particular writer's opinion, Mosley is going to take a frightful beating on May 7. His reflexes are just too far gone (at least compared to Pacquiao's), and his heart is too big.

Should that prediction prove inaccurate, then it's highly unlikely Mosley will retire. If he's competitive against Pacquiao—or if he somehow wins the fight—big paydays obviously still await him.

But what if he takes the kind of vicious pounding that leaves the boxing world begging him to walk away? He's 39, and we all know the direction in which time moves. But Sugar Shane just doesn't seem the type to get out at the right time. He still has a passion for the sport, he loves to train, and as we know based on TMZ's reports of how much green flows ex-wife Jin's way on a monthly basis, his life is not inexpensive. So the guess here is that this will not be Mosley's last fight.

10. Do we have a chance of seeing a Ring champion crowned at welterweight in the Pacquiao-Mosley winner's next fight?

We most definitely do, and there are actually three different scenarios that might get us there.

Scenario No 1: This is either the dream scenario or the pipe dream scenario depending on what your preferred word to follow "glass half" is, but if Pacquiao beats Mosley and Pacquiao-Mayweather miraculously comes together for the fall, then it's the top two in the division (and the sport) fighting each other and all is well with the boxing world.

Scenario No. 2: If Pacquiao defeats Mosley and fights Andre Berto next, and Mayweather has no plans to fight anyone anytime soon and is removed from The Ring rankings due to inactivity, then it's number one vs. number two (Berto is currently ranked third, behind Mayweather). Should Pacquiao win that fight, he will have honorably claimed the championship by completely cleaning out the welterweight division, save for Mayweather.

Scenario No. 3: If Mosley beats Pacquiao, then a rematch could be for the vacant title. Yes, if Mayweather has returned to activity by then (or at least announced a plan to return to activity), he'd probably get the top spot on account of his convincing win over Mosley. But if you remove Mayweather from the equation—or, more accurately, if he removes himself—then Mosley would almost certainly be number one, Pacquiao would almost certainly be number two, and a rematch would almost certainly happen immediately.

So one way or another, it feels better than 50/50 that we'll see a welterweight champ crowned in 2011. One way or another, Pacquiao will be involved in that championship fight.

And unlike with Pacquiao vs. Mosley, when we preview that fight with 10 burning questions, one of them figures to be "Who will win?" ■

JOSEPH AGBEKO vs.
ABNER MARES

VIC DARCHINYAN vs.
YONNHY PEREZ

THE BANTAMWEIGHT TOURNAMENT: WINNER TAKES ALL

THE FINALS

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PACQUIAO -MOSLEY

A 20 Category Analysis

By Lee Groves

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

In the weeks following Shane Mosley's ninth-round destruction of Antonio Margarito in January 2009, most fans believed a Sugar-and-Spice showdown between Mosley and pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao was the next best thing to the Pacquiao-Mayweather superfight.

What a difference two years have made.

While Typhoon Manny blew through Ricky Hatton, Miguel Cotto, Joshua Clottey, and Margarito—a gauntlet that saw Pacquiao add three divisional belts to his collection—Mosley endured a momentum-killing 16-month layoff, then suffered a lopsided loss to Mayweather and an ugly draw to Sergio Mora. As a result, the shine that emanated from Pacquiao-Mosley in 2009 turned to tarnish in 2011.

Still, many words will be written because each man's name inspires sparks of recognition, especially among mainstream fans. Every fight that generates this level of interest deserves a thorough analysis of the nuts-and-bolts—and that's where THE RING comes in.

Over the next several pages, Pacquiao and Mosley will be rated in 20 categories that encompass the physical and the intangible. Each fighter is rated on a scale of 0 to 5, with a score of 100 denoting the perfect fighter. The assessments will be largely, but not exclusively, based on their last three fights.

The physical categories are self-explanatory: Hand speed, foot speed, power (lead hand), power (trail hand), jab effectiveness, hook effectiveness, cross and uppercut effectiveness, body punching and infighting skills, reach, endurance, ability to slip and block punches, physical condition, and resistance to cuts.

Traits involving intangibles are more subjective because they dig into a fighter's psyche. These include "poise and reaction to external pressures," which assesses how a fighter deals with the glare that accompanies big events. "Other general defensive skills" judges an athlete's capacity to neutralize opponents' surges and overcome crises while. "killer instinct" references a battler's willingness to throw mercy aside and mete out the most punishment possible.

Some categories involve attributes that can only be acquired through hard-earned experience. "Intelligence and strategic dexterity" gauges the ability to formulate fight plans, execute on-the-fly adjustments, and following his trainer's blueprint. "Ability to absorb punches and recover from a knockdown" is as much about a fighter's mindset as his conditioning while "experience and quality of opponents" judges his resume—and his eagerness to take risks. Finally "peak quotient" assigns a value of where the fighter stands in comparison to his prime.

This analysis is not intended to be the final word—that privilege is reserved for the fighters—but it will provide plenty of fodder for discussion and debate. After all, trading opinions is half the fun. So without further delay, let's get started:

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

1. Hand Speed

Pacquiao's blazing fists have been the foundation of his historic run through the divisions. Where some fighters produce occasional three- and four-punch bursts, Pacquiao strings together six- or seven-punch bouquets that are thrown in unpredictable patterns and from angles only southpaws can conjure. Even at 32, Pacquiao's speed rates 5.0.

The same could have been said of Mosley during his lightweight reign and his landmark first win over Oscar De La Hoya, but those days are long past. Still, his raw speed is remarkable for someone pushing 40, and he's still faster than most of today's contenders. Mayweather and Mora's fists were only slightly quicker, and Mosley's combinations made mincemeat of Margarito. Thus, he rates a 4.5.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

THE STICK

Mosley's reach and left jab keeps Margarito where Sugar Shane wants him—at range with his hands down. When he utilizes his jab properly, it also helps Mosley set up power punches and combinations.

2. Foot Speed

Pacquiao's mobility is another key to his tremendous success. Pacquiao's superb footwork creates punching angles on offense and enables him to elude counterattacks on defense. His fluidity in both directions only adds to his opponents' headaches, as Cotto, Clottey, and Margarito will attest. Another 5.0 for Manny.

The once swift Mosley fought flat-footed against the speedier Mayweather and Mora, but he also showed adept movement against the heavy-legged Margarito. His "power boxing" philosophy doesn't invest a premium on movement, and it's unlikely he'll utilize it much against Pacquiao. Though aging, Mosley merits a respectable 4.0

3. Power (Lead Hand)

In past years, Pacquiao's right was a mere table-setter for the big left, but, once he developed his right hook, he improved exponentially. While it still doesn't have the power of his left, opponents must now respect it. Thus, it deserves a 4.0.

Most of Mosley's left-handed power lies in his body hooks, which proved effective against Margarito and Mora. These days, hooks targeting the head are rare, and, when they land, they don't have the same snap. A pair of head hooks flattened Ricardo Mayorga in 2008, and a heavy hook to the jaw ushered Margarito's demise in 2009. But Mayweather easily shook off one early head hook, and Mora faced few hooks targeting the jaw. Given recent form, a 4.0 is fair.

TWO-HANDED TROUBLE

Gone are the days when Pacquiao's opponents only had to worry about his left hand. As Antonio Margarito discovered, the Filipino southpaw's lead right has become almost as dangerous as his left.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

4. Power (Trail Hand)

Pacquiao's left crosses devastated lighter opponents, but, against bigger men, the single-shot left is diminished. Still, a wicked left dropped Cotto in the fourth, and Clottey, though never floored, said Pacquiao has the power to hurt welterweights. That's good enough to rate a 4.0.

Mosley's right shook Mayweather to his foundation multiple times in the second round, but, these days, his power rights are rounded or chopped rather than straight, which signals an erosion of flexibility. Mosley's right still carries plenty of kick, so it scores 4.5.

5. Jab Effectiveness

Despite his stylistic metamorphosis, Pacquiao's jab remains the weakest part of his arsenal because jabs are ineffective against the army of right-handers southpaws face. According to CompuBox, Pacquiao's jab landed three percent of the time against Clottey, 18 percent against Margarito, but a more respectable 27 percent against Cotto. A 3.0 grade fits here.

Mosley's jab is only slightly better. While Mosley jabbed well to the body against Mayweather and Margarito, and a body jab helped set up a concussive right against "Money," it is not Mosley's money punch because it lacks steam and accuracy. He landed 22 percent of them against Margarito, 19 percent against Mora, and 16 percent against Mayweather. He deserves a 3.5 here.

DIGGING DOWNSTAIRS Pacquiao goes around Joshua Clottey's elbow with a right to the ribs. "Pac-Man" is just as comfortable fighting on the inside as he is at range.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

6. Hook Effectiveness

As mentioned previously, Pacquiao's right hook is his most improved punch. He staggered the iron-chinned Margarito with one in the 10th, and it produced a flash knockdown against Cotto. Considering Pacquiao is an ex-flyweight titleholder, the impressiveness of these power demonstrations can't be overstated. While the hook isn't the equal of his left cross in terms of power, it still rates a 4.0 for its accuracy.

Mosley's left hook is an incomplete weapon because it's far more effective to the body than the head. He does throw the body hook with gusto, and it does hurt. So if the body hook is a 4.5 and the head hook a 3.5, a 4.0 is justified.

7. Cross/Uppercut Effectiveness

For both, it's a half-and-half proposition because each uses the cross spectacularly while the uppercut is neglected. Of the two, Mosley's uppercut is better because he used it with both hands against Mora, and a right uppercut started the wave of blows that led to a knockdown of Margarito. Because Pacquiao is vulnerable to uppercuts—Clottey hit him with five of them in the 11th round alone—Mosley would be well-advised to include them in his blueprint.

As for Pacquiao, his crosses are chin-seeking missiles while the uppercut is almost non-existent. Because Mosley uses both punches better as a whole, he gets a 4.5 to 4.0 edge.

8. Bodypunching And Infighting Skills

Pacquiao is a devoted infighter, but, in his last few fights against much bigger men, his blows in the trenches were intended to target and tenderize rather than devastate. Most of the time Pacquiao fights at arm's length so he can prevent his larger foes from draping their weight on him. Score him a 4.0.

Mosley also works best with his arms extended, but he can blast the flanks when the situation strikes. His body attack in the later rounds drew a hesitant Mora into crowd-pleasing exchanges down the stretch, but, more often than not, Mosley is more grappler than puncher in close quarters. He's also a 4.0.

9. Reach

The 5'6½" Pacquiao owns a 67½" reach, only slightly above average for a man his height. His enormous speed and mobility makes up for most shortcomings because he can nip in and out of range well before his bigger and slower opponents can react. For this, Pacquiao rates 3.5.

Conversely, Mosley's 74" reach is very lengthy for someone standing 5'9". However, Mosley's height is average for a welterweight, and his style is not predicated on long punches that keep opponents at bay. So while he has the equipment to use his range against Pacquiao, his warrior's heart demands a fight. While he could have rated 4.5 in this category, his style dictates a 4.0.

10. Endurance

Even as Pacquiao fights progressively bigger opponents, he showed no signs of slowing down against Cotto, Clottey, and Margarito. In all three fights, he stepped on the gas at the halfway point and forced them to choke on his smoke. He's a strong 5.0 here.

Mosley's stamina runs hot-and-cold. He showed signs of tiring at the midway point against Mayweather, but he was stronger than Margarito and Mora down the stretch. He also was the first to outperform Cotto in the final rounds at a time when the Puerto Rican was celebrated for that trait. In past years, his finishing kick led to two wins against De La Hoya, but now his status has slipped to a more-than-respectable 4.5.

11. Ability To Slip and Block Punches

Although Pacquiao's defensive skills have improved, he is no Pep, Whitaker, or Mayweather. Margarito regularly popped him with jabs early, and, when Clottey actually threw shots, they were accurate and

authoritative. While he does move his torso from side to side, Pacquiao's offensive firepower is his best defense. A 4.0 for Manny.

Age has dulled Mosley's reflexes. Against Mayweather and Mora, Mosley offered little head movement, and he couldn't roll away from "Money's" lasers. Against the far slower "Tijuana Tornado," Mosley applied upper body movement that allowed him to avoid punishment and limit Margarito's usually prodigious output. The truth may lie between the 3.0 of the Mayweather fight and the 4.0 of the Margarito and Mora fights, so a 3.5 is awarded here.

12. Resistance To Cuts

In his lighter-weight days—most notably against Morales (first fight) and Marquez (second fight)—Pacquiao's scar tissue proved troublesome. Ever since moving up from 130, Pacquiao's face has sustained little damage aside from discoloration and minor swellings. This may be more a testament to his vastly improved defense than the state of his brows, but he still rates a 4.5.

Given his combative ways, Mosley's skin is astonishingly resilient. The only cut he suffered in an 18-year, 54-fight career against the best in three divisions was a small butt-induced nick on the hairline in the first Forrest fight. In this regard, Mosley's nickname should be "Mr. Clean." An easy 5.0.

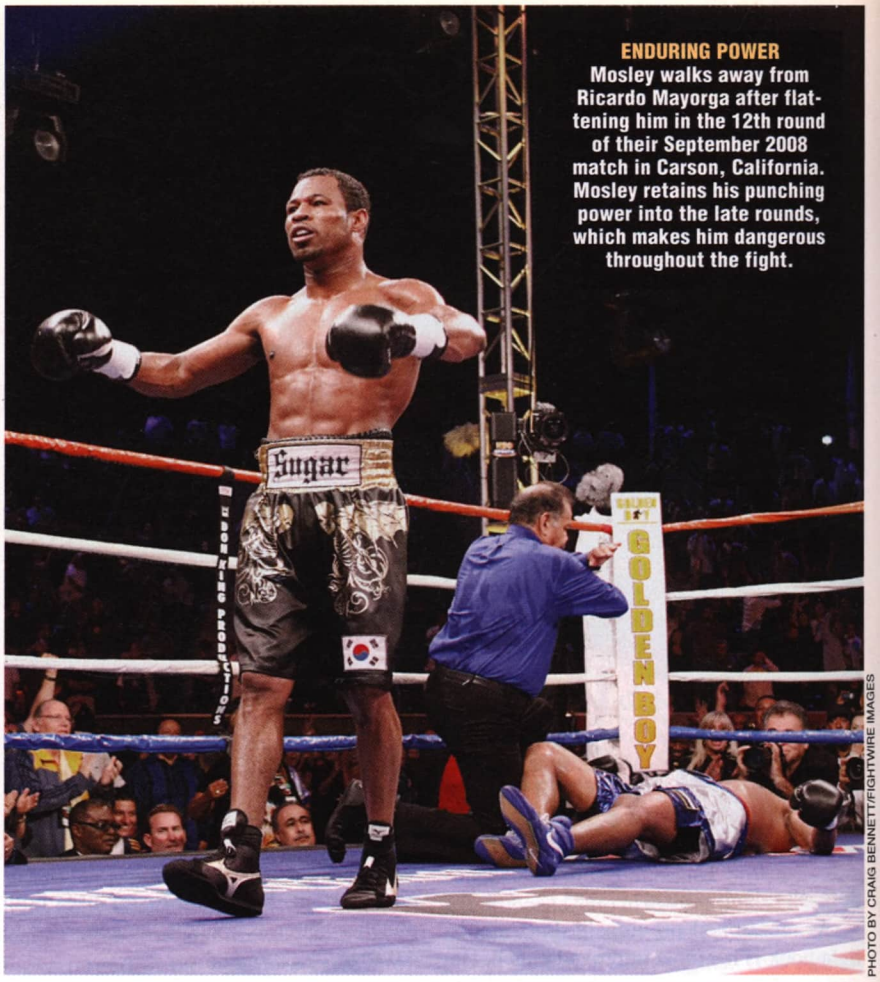
13. Physical Condition

Both are notorious gym rats and their ripped physiques are proof of their Herculean work ethic. Pacquiao's four-hour workouts are legendary, and he appears invulnerable to all wearing-down tactics. He admitted that the Margarito fight was his toughest because of the energy required to hold off a 165-pound opponent, but his cardiovascular effort concealed whatever stress he felt. Another 5.0 for Pacquiao.

Mosley is almost obsessive about staying in shape between fights. Before the Mayweather fight, trainer Naazim Richardson said Mosley spent part of a South America vacation working out in local gyms to maintain his edge. That is an extraordinary level of commitment for any fighter, much less one who's 39. A well-deserved 5.0 for Shane.

14. Poise And Reaction To External Pressures

Both fighters not only are accustomed to the media glare surrounding big-time bouts, they revel in it. One can't find two looser athletes coming down the aisle as they wear megawatt smiles that radiate genuine enjoyment rather than macho bravado.



ENDURING POWER
Mosley walks away from Ricardo Mayorga after flattening him in the 12th round of their September 2008 match in Carson, California. Mosley retains his punching power into the late rounds, which makes him dangerous throughout the fight.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

FIGHTING FIT
Thanks to his incredible work ethic, Pacquiao has not had any trouble making weight since his early days as a flyweight. He appears just as energized in the final round as he does in the first.

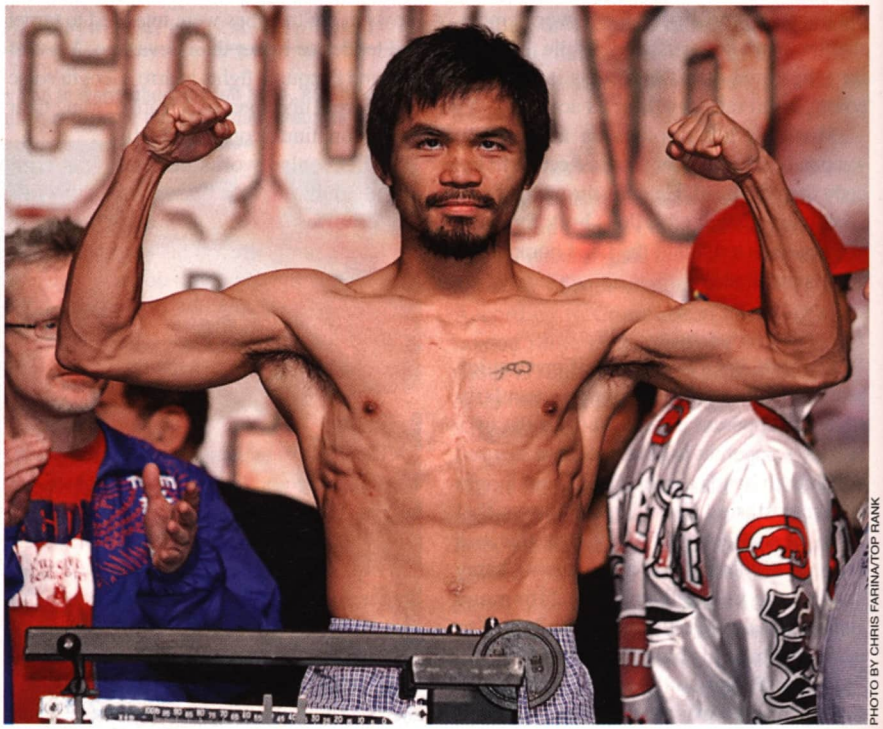


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

A WINNING COMBINATION
Trainer Naazim Richardson poses with Mosley prior to his fight with Sergio Mora. Mosley has always been a gym rat, and, according to Richardson, he even trains while on vacation.

PHOTO BY GENE BLEVINS/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

Pacquiao is the ultimate multitasker as he has, at various times, blended movies, singing, billiards tournaments, pick-up basketball games, appearances on TV shows, political rallies, and two runs for office into his training schedule. He also is truly never alone as he brings a huge entourage to every fight. Others would find the constant attention distracting, but Pacquiao appears to feed off it. A strong 5.0 for Manny.

Any doubts about Mosley's focus were eradicated when he produced a career performance against Margarito amidst the leaking of his videotaped testimony and his then-wife Jin's filing for divorce. Just about anyone else would have been rattled beyond description but Mosley successfully compartmentalized his crises. A robust 5.0 for Mosley.

15. Other General Defensive Tactics

During those rare times when Pacquiao was under duress, he was breathtakingly proactive. He lashed out with even more fury, as if he couldn't tolerate a moment of weakness. He displayed clever upper body movement against Clottey after being clocked with several uppercuts, but Pacquiao is a predator at heart even when his brain is fuzzy. We still don't know how he'll react when a true welterweight shakes him to his core, so a 4.5 will do for now.

Like Pacquiao, we've seldom seen a shaken Mosley but his reactions to the two Forrest knockdowns in fight one are revealing. Woozy and without legs, Mosley reached out and grabbed whenever he could but was retaliating less than 30 seconds later. Over the next several minutes, Mosley moved, clinched, ducked, and punched just enough to clear his head. By the fourth, he was fine. Few could have survived Forrest's vicious assault, but are those instincts and reflexes still there? A hesitant 4.5 for Shane.

16. Killer Instinct

Pacquiao showed plenty of venom as he relentlessly banged away at Cotto, Clottey, and Margarito, but, at the time, he also demonstrated compassion. He thrice gestured to referee Laurence Cole to stop the Margarito massacre in the 11th and respectfully throttled down in the 12th. Pacquiao is not the remorseless savage Duran was, but his ferocity still rates a 4.5.

Mosley was a 5.0-quality finisher in his lightweight prime, but time and weight has somewhat compromised his capabilities. Flashes of his best reemerged as he blasted a final right to Margarito's face as his rival slumped into the ropes, and the two Mayorga knockdowns in the final 30 seconds wiped out memories of an otherwise uneven fight. But he couldn't finish off Mayweather when he had the chance, and that hurts his score. Mosley rates a 4.0, but the opportunities to exercise those talents are fewer and farther between.

17. Intelligence And Strategic Dexterity

While Pacquiao remains an awesome force of nature, the welterweight version has become quite the tactician. Trainer Freddie Roach has expressed amazement at Pacquiao's strategic knowledge and says that he would make a good trainer someday. Knowing he could never out-strength Margarito, Pacquiao wisely scaled 144½ to maximize the speed advantage that proved pivotal. He has the smarts to know when to shift gears while still having the physical prowess to carry out his brain's commands—a most enviable combination. Pacquiao deserves an emphatic 5.0.

When all is well, Mosley can carry out a fight plan, but, when that blueprint goes awry, he's often at a loss when it comes to finding solutions on the fly. While he performed better in rematches against Forrest

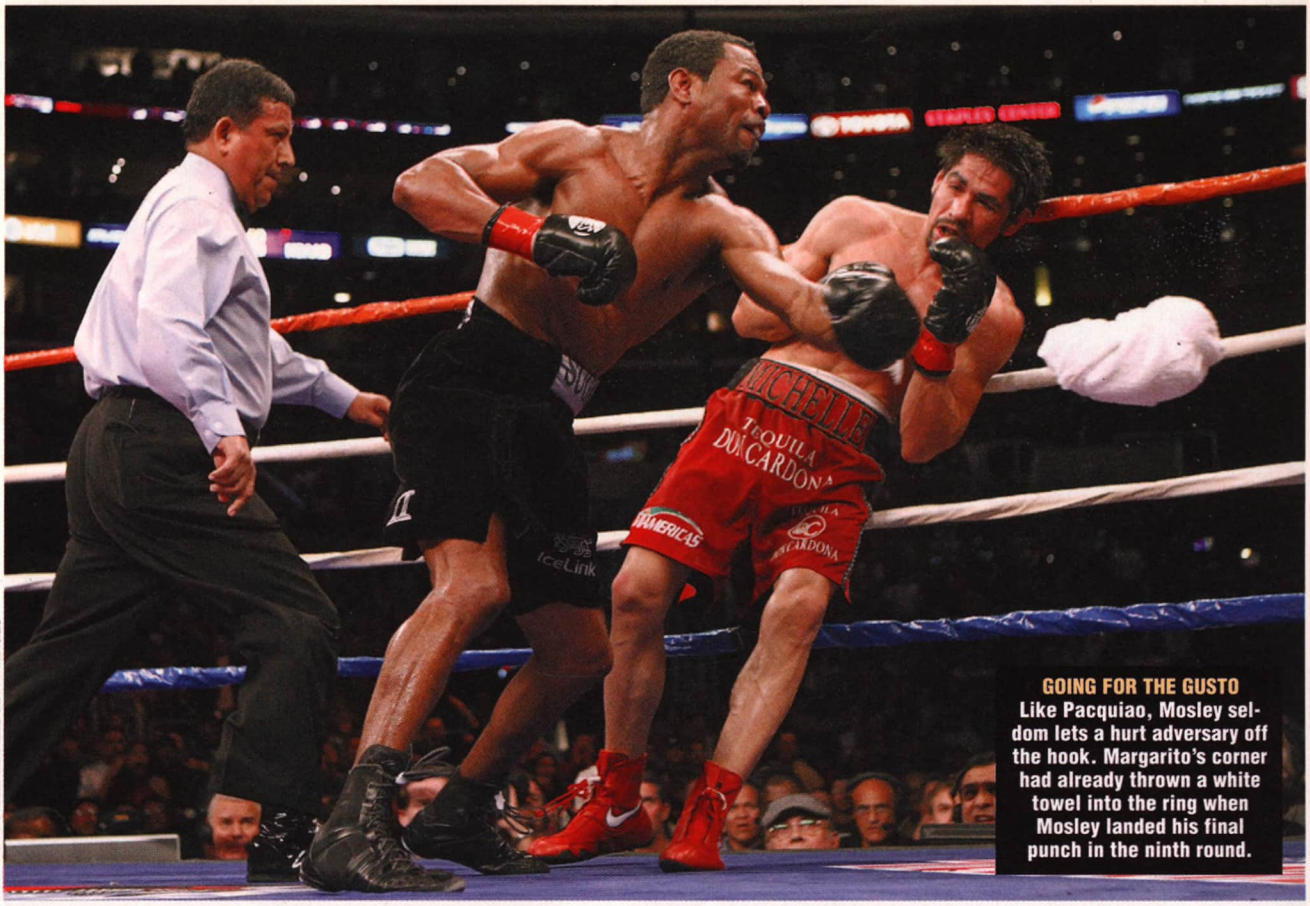


PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

GOING FOR THE GUSTO
Like Pacquiao, Mosley seldom lets a hurt adversary off the hook. Margarito's corner had already thrown a white towel into the ring when Mosley landed his final punch in the ninth round.

PHOTO BY TED ALJIBE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NO MERCY
Ricky Hatton lands on his back after Pacquiao drilled him with a left hook for a dramatic knockout. Pacquiao has always been an excellent finisher once he gets his foe in trouble.

and Wright, he had the luxury of starting fresh, plus he couldn't conjure an adequate response once Mayweather made his adjustments after being stunned in round two. A 3.5 may be somewhat harsh, but the record speaks for itself.

18. Ability To Absorb Punches And Recover From A Knockdown

Pacquiao's ability to take and shake off the blows of naturally bigger men may be the most amazing aspect of this journey up the scale. Pacquiao hasn't suffered a knockdown since November 2003 when Marco Antonio Barrera turned the trick in their first fight. But even that was misleading as replays showed that Pacquiao had tripped over Barrera's feet. Since then, he's been a rock-solid 5.0.

Mosley's chin is among boxing's best. Forrest scored the only two knockdowns of "Sugar Shane's" career, but Mosley said it was the butt preceding it that stunned him more—a disputable claim when one watches the video. Mosley has taken the best of everyone he's faced since, and, even as Mayweather clocked him again and again, his ability to snap back into action seldom wavered. A 5.0 for Mosley.

19. Experience And Quality Of Opponents

Pacquiao and Mosley boast two of the deepest resumes in boxing, and each has earned a strong 5.0. Pacquiao has crossed gloves with 14 men who won belts, and Mosley is the ninth-consecutive titleholder he has faced. Only one man can lay claim to such a streak: Mosley himself, whose string is also at nine.

Sugar Shane has also faced 14 men who have held titles, plus he had the fortitude to face Forrest, Winky Wright, and Luis Collazo when no other world-class fighter would. He was a significant underdog in the first De La Hoya fight (they fought twice) and against Margarito, but still came out 3-0. Yes, Pacquiao and Mosley's records bear the scars (a combined 12 blemishes), but their star power continued to shine. In this age of overcautious matchmaking, more fighters and managers should learn from their example.

20. Peak Quotient

It's difficult to believe that the 32-year-old Pacquiao, an aggressive 57-fight veteran who has campaigned in nearly half of boxing's weight classes can still be near the top of his game. But that's exactly where he is. His nimbleness of mind and body are something to behold, but the fact that he's getting hit a little bit more lately suggests his time at the ultimate summit may be waning. While he rates an improbable 5.0, he won't stay there forever.

On the other hand, Mosley is nowhere near the fighter he once was and perhaps a notch or two below where he was against Margarito. However, the ultra-slick and quick Mayweather and the cagey Mora may not be the best barometers to gauge Mosley's standing as a fighter because they can make anyone look bad. His hand speed is still above average, but his legs have lost their spring, his reactions are somewhat slower, and his vaunted power punching accuracy has waned. Thus, a 3.5 score he gets here may be a bit generous.

GRADES AT A GLANCE

MANNY PACQUIAO		SHANE MOSLEY
5.0	Hand speed	4.5
5.0	Foot speed	4.0
4.0	Power (lead hand)	4.0
4.0	Power (trail hand)	4.5
3.0	Jab effectiveness	3.5
4.0	Hook effectiveness	4.0
4.0	Cross/uppercut effectiveness	4.5
4.0	Bodypunching and infighting skills	4.0
3.5	Reach	4.0
5.0	Endurance	4.5
4.0	Ability to slip and block punches	3.5
4.5	Resistance to cuts	5.0
5.0	Physical condition	5.0
5.0	Poise and reaction to external pressures	5.0
4.5	Other general defensive tactics	4.5
4.5	Killer instinct	4.0
5.0	Intelligence and strategic dexterity	3.5
5.0	Ability to absorb punches and recover from a knockdown	5.0
5.0	Experience and quality of opponents	5.0
5.0	Peak quotient	3.5
89.0	GRAND TOTAL	85.5

Summary And Prediction

Somewhat surprisingly, Pacquiao and Mosley scored 55 points each in the physical categories. Mosley is bigger and stronger, while Pacquiao is fresher and faster. The stylistic blend should be pleasing. But the intangible categories prove decisive as Pacquiao's 34-30.5 edge paced his ultimate 89.0-85.5 winning margin.

Chalk this up to excellent timing rather than adventuresome matchmaking. The Mosley that annihilated Margarito would have produced a fantastic challenge for "Pac Man," but Top Rank and Team Pacquiao chose to ignore Mosley's frequent and sometimes desperate public challenges—and for good reason. The fight was made only after an aging Mosley suffered back-to-back poor outings against speedy fighters with difficult styles. Taking advantage of a great name that also happens to be a declining force is an oft-used but ignoble tradition in boxing.

The bigger Mosley will do his best, but his best at 39 won't be enough to counteract Pacquiao's considerable gifts. Pacquiao will pull away in the second half en route to a wide—and utterly predictable—decision. ■

Lee Groves is the author of **Tales From the Vault** *and a writer/researcher/punch counter for CompuBox Inc.*

By The Numbers
SHANE MOSLEY

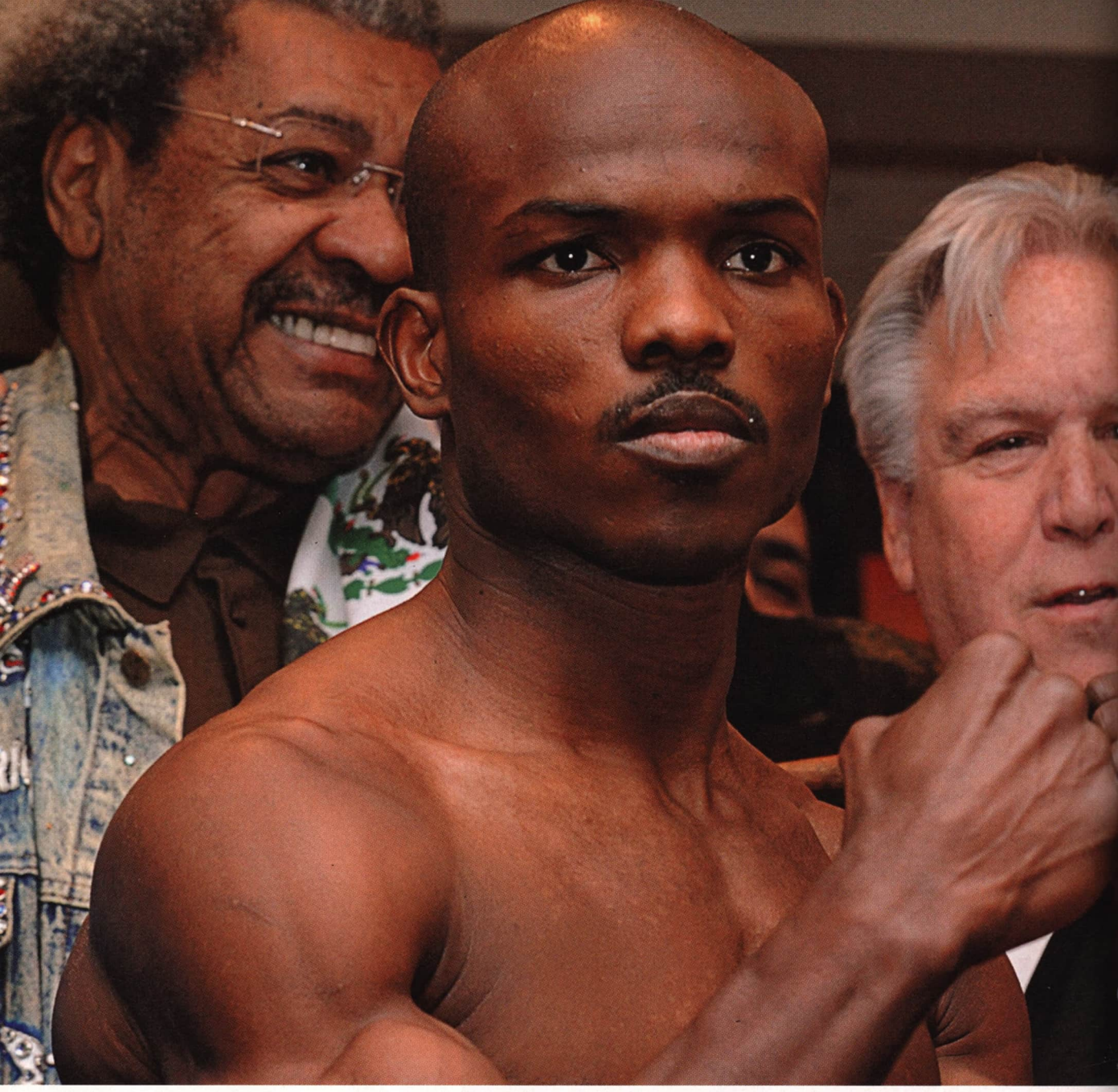
PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

1	Official knockdowns Mosley has suffered in his pro career
1.5	Total pay-per-view buys, in millions, for Mosley's last two bouts, against Floyd Mayweather and Sergio Mora
4	Total points by which Mosley defeated Oscar De La Hoya in their first fight, which nearly everyone agreed Mosley won
6	Total points by which Mosley defeated Oscar De La Hoya in their second fight, which was a highly controversial decision
6	Fights Mosley has had against southpaws
8	Titlists/champions Mosley has defeated
11	Total successful title defenses made by Mosley across three divisions
13	Consecutive fights Mosley won by knockout from 1994-1997
19	Consecutive months Mosley spent atop THE RING's pound-for-pound list (2000-2002)
72.22	Mosley's career knockout percentage
376	Professional rounds boxed (6.96 per fight)
400	Dollars you could have won betting $100 on Mosley to beat Antonio Margarito
475	Dollars you can win betting $100 on Mosley if he beats Pacquiao
833	Days since Mosley's last victory, as of the opening bell for the Pacquiao fight
5,073	Dollars per month Mosley's ex-wife, Jin, spends on clothes, according to documents filed in his divorce proceedings

By The Numbers
MANNY PACQUIAO

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

1.85	Total pay-per-view buys, in millions, for Pacquiao's last two bouts, against Antonio Margarito and Joshua Clottey
2	American-born fighters Pacquiao fought prior to Mosley
3	Times Pacquiao has been named Fighter of the Year by THE RING
6	First-round knockout wins on Pacquiao's resume
7	Second-round knockout wins on Pacquiao's resume
7	Total successful title defenses made by Pacquiao across eight divisions
8	Filipino movies Pacquiao has acted in
10	Fights since the last time Pacquiao outweighed his opponent at the official weigh-in
11	Total rounds Pacquiao has lost on the judges' scorecards, out of a possible 156, in last six fights
13	Titlists/champions Pacquiao has defeated
35	Consecutive months Pacquiao has spent atop THE RING's pound-for-pound list (2008-present)
66.67	Pacquiao's career knockout percentage
106	Pacquiao's weight, in pounds, for his first pro fight
144½	Pacquiao's weight, in pounds, for his most recent pro fight
329	Professional rounds boxed (5.77 per fight)
59,153	Votes by which Pacquiao defeated Roy Chiongbian to win his congressional seat



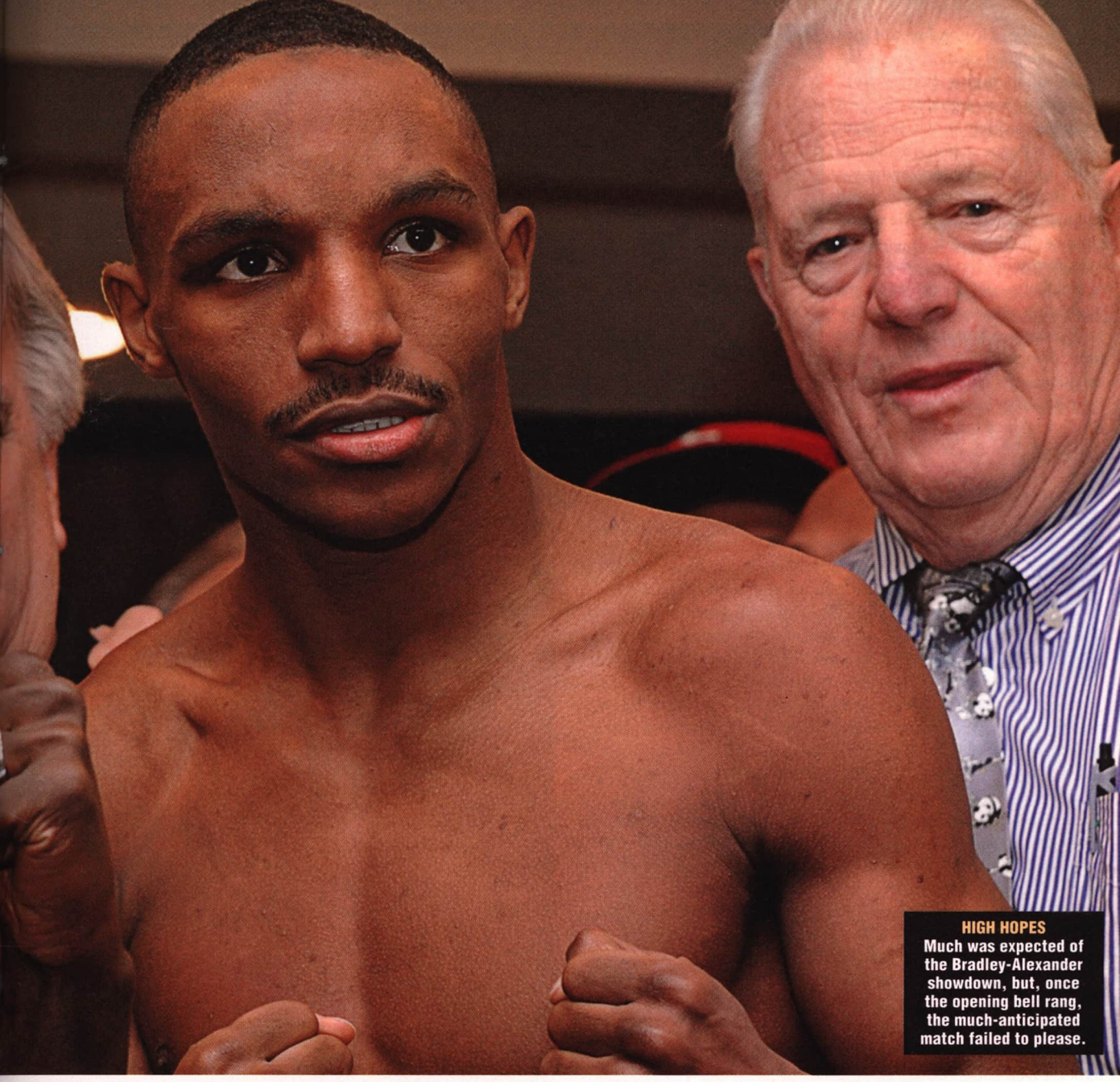
BUT IT LOOKED G

Why Bradley-Alexander

By David Mayo • Photos by Naoki Fukuda

The undefeated duo of Timothy Bradley and Devon Alexander had a lot to live up to, thanks to the buildup of their January 29 bout, only to leave boxing fans feeling about as empty as the aged 80,000-seat stadium with 6,247 fans who bore witness.

Bradley and Alexander were supposed to kick off 2011 with a fight to remember without even forcing fans to plunk down the pay-per-view nut. Big names were supposed to be in the winner's future. Amir Khan at worst—Floyd Mayweather and/or Manny Pacquiao at best.



HIGH HOPES
Much was expected of the Bradley-Alexander showdown, but, once the opening bell rang, the much-anticipated match failed to please.

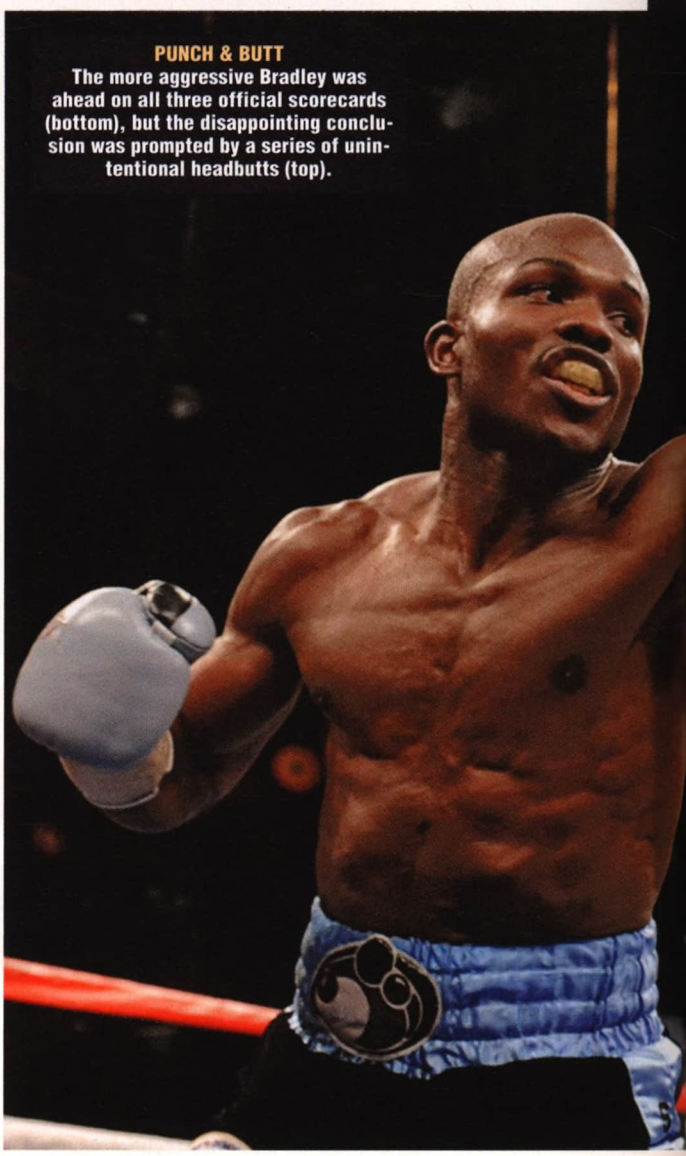
REAT ON PAPER!
Turned Out To Be A Dud

But Bradley-Alexander devolved into the long list of big fights this century that failed to meet expectations.

So maybe Y2K was real, at least as it pertains to the most important fights in boxing, because an array of executions such as Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson, tactical specials such as Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya, and one-sided beatdowns such as Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad have dominated the big-fight landscape for several years.

Bradley-Alexander did not rise to the level of those events although their junior welterweight unification was arguably the best available matchup in what is arguably the deepest division in the sport. Its unsatisfactory ending—with Bradley winning a 10th-round technical decision after Alexander claimed inability to fully open his eyes following the last in a series of headbutts—left plenty of people wondering what the fuss was about.

Bradley, a few days after the fight, complained that too much of the focus was on the nature of the fight, which he blamed on Alexander. Bradley stalked but couldn't finish. Alexander moved around the perimeter warily and blinked his way to a premature ending. For that, Bradley resented the criticism and said people should refocus on the nine-plus rounds before the fight was stopped, resulting in unanimous scores of 97-93 (Duane Ford), 98-93 (Omar Mintun) and 96-95 (Tom Miller).



PUNCH & BUTT
The more aggressive Bradley was ahead on all three official scorecards (bottom), but the disappointing conclusion was prompted by a series of unintentional headbutts (top).

"I'm quick, I'm unpredictable, and I'm fast," Bradley said. "And that makes my opponents hesitate, just like my sparring partners do. [Alexander] wasn't busy like he normally is. He was missing a lot. I was bobbing and weaving, and he was frustrated."

There have been exceptions to the big-fight flops in the 2000s, most notably anything involving Manny Pacquiao and a series of lighter-weight fighters who have made their names against each other, such as Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Manuel Marquez, Rafael Marquez, Erik Morales, and Israel Vasquez.

But in the case of Bradley-Alexander and many others, wasn't the possibility of a bad fight somewhat predictable? Bradley leads with his head as a regular habit, and the left-handed Alexander obviously proved capable of doing the same. Neither man is particularly heavy-handed, so Bradley, the more aggressive fighter, assumed the role of a puncher without a big punch, while Alexander assumed the role of the cute southpaw who didn't seem particularly motivated by winning and was criticized widely for suspicion of quitting the fight.

Didn't anybody see that coming?

"Any time I see a fight involving Tim Bradley or Evander Holyfield, I expect headbutts," said Rick Glazer, a matchmaker who worked the fight for Don King, Alexander's promoter.

Glazer acknowledged that the quality of major fights recently has been affected by several factors, including athletes who don't train unless a fight is upcoming, trainers who can't teach in the gym or make mid-fight adjustments, and matchmakers whose perceptions are cut out of the equation once a proposed fight reaches a certain status.

"It has caused a situation where many big fights don't meet expectations unless their styles just mesh perfectly," Glazer said.

Why do megafights or fights verging on such status disappoint so often? The reasons are varied. Some are obvious, some subtle, and certainly many are specific to a given matchup. But the following, in some combination, generally have had a direct bearing on the biggest letdowns in recent years:

• The most successful and marketable boxers of the last decade, with the noteworthy exception of Manny Pacquiao, have been so athletically gifted or tactically conscious that they generally won fights by avoiding brawls. This group is led by Floyd Mayweather, Roy Jones, Lennox Lewis, and Bernard Hopkins. Even Oscar De La Hoya, as he

progressed through the weights, became warier than when he was blasting out opponents from junior lightweight to junior welterweight. The Klitschko brothers have risked little but keep winning.

The Marvin Haglers, Mike Tysons, Evander Holyfields, and Julio Cesar Chavezes have vanished, replaced by a chess player, a wannabe basketball player, and an array of aspiring promoters and advanced-degree collegians. That transition left a lot of fighters wealthy and a lot of pay-per-view buyers feeling $50 poorer for watching them.

• Public demand and economics almost always outweigh match-making reason, the category into which Bradley-Alexander fell. HBO paid a $2.75-million licensing fee, plus hundreds of thousands in promotion and marketing, which included a Times Square billboard. Moreover, the Silverdome owner paid a Las Vegas-sized site fee, only to see the fight turn out to be pretty much what any matchmaker might have guessed, even before the unsatisfactory ending.

• Rematches above 135 pounds haven't met expectations in years. Diego Corrales-Jose Luis Castillo I, one of the great championship fights in history, got everyone hot and bothered for a dud rematch that started Castillo's history of indifference to contractual weigh-in clauses. Mayweather-Castillo I was supposed to be just another fight in Mayweather's long-term HBO contract, but it wasn't. Mayweather-Castillo II wasn't supposed to be, but it was. Shane Mosley-De La Hoya II and Antonio Tarver-Jones II and III are other examples. With rare exception, most notably the Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward sequels, rematches in the heavier weight classes have not met expectations.

• Some fighters, using the term loosely, compete carefully and craftily to maximize profits while minimizing damage. Lewis and the Klitschko brothers, the dominant heavyweights of this century, were (are) maddeningly tactical. De La Hoya was the biggest victim of his own miscalculation in that regard when he backed out of a probable points win against Felix Trinidad. Mayweather admitted turning into a safety-first fighter during his long-term HBO deal.

• Too many megafights stew so long or materialize at such dramatically different points in fighters' careers that they become

WHAT'S NEXT?
Bradley clearly had no surplus fat on him when he weighed in for the Alexander fight but said he's willing to move up to welterweight if he had to in order to obtain big fights.

little more than necessary torch-passings or dismantlements. Lewis-Tyson was expected to be that way. Pacquiao-De La Hoya wasn't, but turned out to be.

That last point isn't a new phenomenon. Torch-passing fights have happened in boxing from Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries to Rocky Marciano-Joe Louis, to Terry Norris-Ray Leonard. Still, they rarely do much to satisfy the broader interests of the sport or the paying customers and are conducted by people who often are strongly suspicious of the very product they're selling.

Before Mayweather destroyed Gatti in 2005, Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler put into words what so many inside boxing expected: "It's a fight made because of economic considerations, not artistic considerations. People will see the fight and think that Floyd Mayweather is greatest fighter in the history of boxing and that Arturo Gatti never should have become a professional fighter. And both sides will be wrong."

Bradley-Alexander was a little big fight, not the biggest matchup in the game, but perhaps a fight that could send the winner into bouts of that magnitude. It took place at the Silverdome, in Pontiac, Michigan, because the stadium owner, Andreas Apostolopoulos, paid more in site fees to host the fight ($600,000) than he did for the entire building ($583,000), which used to house the Detroit Lions and Detroit Pistons. The stadium was curtained down to about 15,000 seats, with that filled to about 40-percent capacity. Even so, it wasn't a particularly bad turnout on a snowy night in an economically ravaged region.

Everything went swimmingly until about 80 seconds into the main event when Bradley and Alexander clashed heads for the first of several instances, which multiplied as the fight progressed.

The fight was tactical. Bradley stalked. Alexander boxed. Bradley sensed when Alexander had him timed and shifted gears. CompuBox had Alexander landing more punches, but they were inconsequential. Bradley couldn't hurt Alexander either, but the Californian pressed the fight while the St. Louis native was far too willing to fall into clinches.

Alexander, 21-1 (13), was cut over his right eye early in the fight. Bradley was cut on his left cheek early and then over his left eye by the fight-ending butt.

When the fight was stopped, HBO's Jim Lampley astutely and immediately framed it as the "worst-case scenario for a fight of this stature." Bradley was left to acknowledge that he "didn't like how the fight ended," claiming Alexander didn't have to go out that way.

"He quit," Bradley said. "I shouldn't have to hear any criticism because Devon Alexander can't handle a cut on his eye, a cut he fought most of the fight with. I know I have a history of headbutts, and I understand that part of it. But he was lunging in too. When the fight ended, I was throwing a punch. He was dipping and looking for a counter; our heads came together. That's how it happens."

Bradley spent much of his career envisioning a fight against Mayweather, whom he called the "King Of Boxing."

"Floyd would stay on the outside and then, eventually, I think he'd start coming at me, bringing the pressure, trying to bang my body, trying to outwit me with his smarts," Bradley said. "I think that's how it would go. I think I'll be there banging on him on the ropes. I've got a plan on how to beat Mayweather. I've just got to execute it."

Before the Alexander fight, Bradley spent fight week reading a recently released biography of Pacquiao.

"When you know you're going into battle or you feel like you might be going into battle, you've got to be ready," Bradley said. "I like to know a little history about my opponents. So he had a book out, and I'm reading it. I want to know exactly where he came from, why he thinks the way he thinks, and why he does what he does."

Now, it appears that Bradley's victory not only won't springboard him any closer to fights against Mayweather and Pacquiao. What is more, he also didn't create much outcry to fight Khan.

EARLIER FLOP
When Lewis finally faced Tyson in a 2002 heavyweight championship bout that set a new pay-per-view record, it turned out to be a one-sided beatdown.

In addition to that, promotional and television adjustments could put future big fights beyond Bradley's reach. His promotional contract with Gary Shaw expires in June, and he is outspoken about his desire to explore free agency. HBO, meantime, purposely stockpiled many of the best 140- and 147-pounders to create a series of bouts, ultimately leading to Pacquiao and Mayweather, only to see Bob Arum take Pacquiao-Mosley to Showtime and try to lure Juan Manuel Marquez away from Golden Boy Promotions in order to make Pacquiao-Marquez III in late 2011. Mayweather's ongoing indifference to it all hasn't helped either.

Bradley, meanwhile, voices a willingness to go up to welterweight for the biggest fights, but he admits that he feels "stronger than anybody I've ever been in the ring with at 140 pounds, but, at 147, it's a little different."

He based that opinion upon his ascent to welterweight for a single fight last year, against Carlos Abregu. Even though he won a unanimous decision, the Abregu fight prompted Bradley to say that "punching power's a lot different at 147 pounds" and that his "footwork wasn't there. I felt like my feet weren't fast enough, my hands weren't as quick, and I wasn't as sharp."

Joel Diaz, who trained Bradley for the Alexander fight, said he thinks Khan is the best possible matchup for Bradley.

"The only thing he has is a great jab," Diaz said of Khan, "and I think if Tim just follows a good plan, breaks him to the body, takes him in the later rounds, he would do real good. He's fast. Still, Khan's reflexes are way faster than Devon's, so it's going to be a tougher fight."

Bradley, 27-0 (11), said he is more than willing to move up to the weight where he felt sluggish, to fight one of the two elite fighters in the sport, knowing he would be a heavy underdog against either.

"At the end of the day, I'm going to take the fight that is the best for me and my family," Bradley said. "It isn't always about the styles. It's about business and taking care of yours." ■

***David Mayo covers boxing for the* Grand Rapids *(Michigan)* Press *and is a regular contributor to* The Ring.**

"SUPER SIX" SEM

UNDERACHIEVER
Arthur Abraham will have a chance to redeem himself against Ward.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

FINAL PREVIEW

Froch-Johnson & Ward-Abraham

By William Dettloff

From the very beginning, it was not without some sense of dread that many American fight fans and media types looked toward the last legs of Showtime's "Super Six World Boxing Classic" tournament. Not just because tournaments of this type are fun and rare and all that,

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS
Few experts predicted that Andre Ward would be the tournament favorite going into the semifinals.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

BATTLING BRIT
Carl Froch has proved to be far more than a one-dimensional slugger.

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

"You won't find anyone willing to embarrass himself by predicting that Froch-Johnson will be anything but a wonderful fight from beginning to end."

but also because the semifinals and finals promised to demonstrate in graphic detail just how far down the totem pole American boxers have slid over the past decade.

Never mind that the 168-pound weight class was invented well after the sport's "Golden Age" to accommodate that pitiable and persecuted class of fighting men too big for middleweight and too small for light heavy. Good enough to be champions, of course, but cursed and rendered by their genes incapable of competing in one of the traditional weight classes. So just add a weight class. What could it hurt?

But enough with the history lesson. The tournament results would serve as confirmation that while outgoing 168-pound champion Joe Calzaghe might indeed have been a special fighter, he was not so special that other Europeans in the same weight class couldn't also exert a goodly degree of dominance over a pool of decidedly mediocre Americans.

Indeed, the tournament favorites going in were Arthur Abraham—stubby, broad-shouldered, mysterious, an Armenian based in Germany—and elegant, Danish precision-puncher Mikkel Kessler, whose only loss was to the aforementioned Calzaghe in a heck of a nice chess match attended by some 50,000 screaming Welshmen in Cardiff. And, oh yes, Abraham had never lost.

The Brit? An insufferably arrogant and under-talented Carl Froch who was somehow appealing nevertheless and who could be counted on to beat the Americans. Who wouldn't be? Certainly he would fall short against one of the favorites, but there was time for that, and, until then, the Brits would eat it up like so much fish and chips.

And what did the Americans offer? A pair of Andres, one more skittish than the next, and a Jermain Taylor already softened up by time, Kelly Pavlik, and little substantive talent, a deficiency realized too late. If one lived in and rooted primarily for fighters from the United States, which we recognize also too late is a no-no in this starkly and suddenly global economy, it would not be pretty. And the last couple rounds of the tournament in particular, which we now have reached, would be decidedly unpleasant.

So with the semifinals upon us, you can see how things have changed. Froch, 27-1 (21), is not just the one with the smirk and the hot girlfriend. He is the stubborn competitor and overachiever who beat Andre Dirrell by a little, lost to Kessler by about as much, and made the once-terrifying Abraham, 31-2 (25), look like a lovelorn pacifist.

Abraham is the loser of two straight tournament fights, a seeming Sampson after the haircut, all the mystery and aura about him gone after an electrifying win over Taylor was followed by dismal losses to Dirrell and Froch. Kessler bore so little resemblance to the sharpshooter who pushed Calzaghe that he may as well have entered the tournament under a pseudonym and wearing Groucho Marx glasses complete with a bushy black mustache. He is gone due to "injury," and good riddance if what we saw is all he has left. We look forward to seeing him host the Danish version of *Family Feud*. The same goes for Dirrell, who fought gallantly and well but, in his win over Abraham, suffered an injury that from a timing perspective just happened to coincide perfectly with his camp's reluctance to having him square off against Andre Ward for the amount of money he'd agreed to accept at the tourney's start. What are the odds?

Whatever the case, Froch now faces the improbable Glen Johnson, a 42-year-old manifestation of professionalism and desire who took the call from Showtime's Ken Hershmann the way a firefighter responds to news of a three-alarm blaze at a home for crippled kids and strippers. That's one of the many reasons we love him.

Johnson's knockout win over underachieving but occasionally dangerous Allan Green in his first tournament appearance was a boon to 40-something fight fans everywhere, who immediately fell victim to and have since labored under the dangerous aesthetic that says: "Hey, if he can do it, why can't I?" (Note to all of you: You can't. *He* can. That's why he's Glen Johnson, and you get out of breath taking a shower. Have another sausage sandwich, fatty.)

You won't find anyone willing to embarrass himself by predicting that Froch-Johnson will be anything but a wonderful fight from beginning to end. Maybe that wouldn't have been the case before the tournament, when all we knew of Froch was his slim points win over Jean Pascal and, yes, the hot girlfriend. Now we know him better. And so does Johnson.

"I think Carl Froch is a good fighter. He's tough and durable. He has a lot of subtle skills," Johnson told THE RING in February. "When someone's a two-time world champion, you've got to give him some respect. He fought a brilliant fight against Abraham. I thought it was a brilliant strategy, and he used it well."

Most of us thought Froch would meet Abraham head-to-head and go to war with him because, well, that's really all he'd be capable of doing. That wasn't the case. Froch outboxed him. And that was not only surprising but also impressive.

"I was a little surprised that he did [box against Abraham]," Johnson said. "I really thought he would make it a fight. But he boxed brilliantly and fought a smart, smart fight. He used his height and used his range and won the fight easily."

It would seem reasonable to expect Froch to try a similar strategy against Johnson even if it would be more fun if he met him head-on. But that's never been the way to beat Johnson unless you hit very hard and very often and can do it for all 12 rounds the way young Tavoris Cloud did against Johnson last August. The close decision that went Cloud's way could have gone to Johnson just as well had Johnson, 51-14-2 (35), not been born under the black cloud that seems to follow him from close fight to close fight, always working the judges against him.

One could infer that Froch's anvil-like chin will serve him as well against Johnson as it has against everyone else, but power never has been Johnson's game anyway. He wears you down with that chopping overhand right, he doesn't knock you out with it unless you're Allan Green, and so Froch should have no fear there. Nor does he have to worry about Johnson pulling any surprises. He is an old dog, and, even if he weren't, he is what he has always been. He told THE RING he doesn't anticipate changing his style in the least to

TOUGH OLD DOG
The match between former light heavyweight champion Glen Johnson and Froch is virtually guaranteed to deliver fan-friendly action.

PHOTO BY ALBERTO TAMARGO/GETTY IMAGES

accommodate anything Froch does. He will be himself, which is the best thing any fighter can be no matter the strengths of his opponent. Glen Johnson will be Glen Johnson; Froch will be Froch whether he stands there or moves in that stilted way of his, and it will be wonderful. The bout is scheduled for May 21

The other semifinal bout, between Abraham and the streaking Ward, holds far less promise owing primarily, it would seem, to Abraham's startling loss of identity. Even after his loss to Dirrell, most observers imagined he would rebound against Froch, whose style seemed more compatible with Abraham's than did Dirrell's. That's to say he is hittable.

"The fight against Froch was really evidence that Abraham, as a boxer, had gotten broken," Showtime *Championship Boxing* analyst Al Bernstein told THE RING.

"Carl Froch is a good boxer and probably better than he's normally given credit for, but he should not have been able to completely dominate Abraham every second of the fight," Bernstein said. "And Abraham did so little in response that we're now left with this idea that somewhere along the line, maybe because of the style he fights, somewhere, maybe the fire got taken out of him."

Bernstein said it might have been the Dirrell fight that damaged Abraham emotionally since Dirrell did what no other fighter had done against Abraham: He landed a lot of solid punches and didn't stand around waiting for Abraham to pay him back.

"Abraham is very hard to hit because of the way he holds his hands and because he's so short his elbows protect his whole body. But because of his hand speed and the way he looped punches, Dirrell was able to get around his gloves," Bernstein said. "And I think that psychologically that may have had an effect on Abraham."

Abraham seemed just as dispassionate in the weeks after the loss to Froch, choosing not to fire back at longtime trainer Ulli Wegner after several German media outlets quoted Wegner calling Abraham a "coward" and saying, "He has no honor in his body to allow himself to get beat up like that. It was shameful." The two reconciled, and Abraham stopped Stjepan Bozic in as necessary a tune-up fight as there has ever been. It would have been inconceivable for Abraham to go into a bout with Ward, from all evidence the tournament's top dog, after losing two straight losses. Even a record of 1-3 in his last four fights, assuming a loss to Ward, beats the hell out of 0-4. The mere anticipation of a win over Bozic buoyed Abraham's spirits.

"The year 2010 is over for me," Abraham told the press in February. "I'm not talking anymore about the defeats. I'm only looking forward. I have two Super Six fights: first, the semifinal and then the final. In the fight against Bozic, I will satisfy my fans again."

Unfortunately, when Bozic was stopped in the second round due to a wrist injury, it provided little satisfaction or opportunity to work on past deficiencies.

This brings us all quite naturally to Ward, who under most circumstances could be forgiven for suffering a bit of an emotional letdown after whipping, in order, Kessler, Green, and, outside the tournament, the rough-and-tumble Sakio Bika. Now he faces Abraham, who appears in freefall. But Ward, 23-0 (13), impresses as that rare fighter of such emotional stability and single-mindedness that not only will he *tell* the press he is preparing for the best version of Abraham—whether or not that fighter exists anymore—he will *mean* it.

After all, Ward was under no real obligation to fight anyone last November when Dirrell pulled out of their fight, much less a guy as unpredictable and as stylistically challenging as Bika. He took the fight, took away a fair amount of the stuff that makes Bika such a pain in the ass, and went home with another paycheck and another win. Given Ward's emotional strength and what appears to be Abraham's current lack thereof, the easy pick here is Ward any way he wants it—outboxing Abraham from the outside, roughing him up inside, which is the style he's been more than any other lately, or any combination in between. There is, though, the possibility, remote as it is, that Abraham can cure whatever has been ailing him and return to form. If he can do that, who knows?

"Arthur Abraham, when he's really Arthur Abraham, is an interesting challenge for Ward," said Bernstein of the May 14 match. "Ward is capable of boxing and doing all those things that are necessary and you can easily envision him over a 12-round period being careful enough to avoid getting hit by anything and boxing the pants off Abraham. You can easily envision that.

"But I think Abraham at his very best, or when he's doing what he's supposed to do, is an interesting challenge for Andre Ward because Ward isn't a big power puncher, so the fight is likely to go a little ways," Bernstein said. "And even when Abraham was taking all that punishment against Froch, he didn't quit or get stopped. And he's shown he can hurt guys at 168 pounds. So if he can get his mojo back, he'll be an interesting challenge for Ward."

That may indeed be the case. Every so often, a fighter will find his way again not long after losing it and leave us all aghast at his seeming reincarnation. If Abraham can do that, we will have had no reason after all to dread the end of the tournament, regardless of where our loyalties were at the start. ■

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STILL A STAR
It hasn't been all bad news for former IBF and WBA junior middleweight titleholder Vargas. In January 2011, he got a star on Las Vegas' Walk of Fame at The Palms Casino Resort.

PHOTO BY STEVEN LAWTON/FILM MAGIC

THE RETURN OF THE AZTEC WARRIOR

Swindle Victim Fernando Vargas Battles Back

By Don Stradley

Fernando Vargas was approximately a year into his retirement from boxing when he made the shocking discovery that one of his bank accounts was empty. On June 14, 2010, Ventura County police arrested and booked Vargas' business manager, Joseph Pecora, on suspicion of grand theft by embezzlement and forgery.

What made the story all the more troubling was that Pecora and Vargas had a relationship that went well beyond the norm for a business manager and a fighter. They had a friendship dating back to before Vargas turned pro.

"That's how the Devil works," Vargas said in a recent phone conversation with THE RING. "The Devil was God's favorite angel. The people closest to you always hurt you the most."

Struggling with a spell of pneumonia that would ultimately cause the postponement of a proposed comeback bout with Henry Buchanan, Vargas gamely described his recent circumstances. At times he sounded optimistic, offering platitudes about "the next chapter" in his life, but, at other times, he sounded like a man nursing a heartache. Vargas doesn't temper his feelings—think of the relentless hatred he had for Oscar De La Hoya prior to their 2002 bout—and, during our talk, he ran the gamut from helpless despair to sentimentality to gentle laughter. He loves life, even as it pummels him, and he treats the saga of the missing money as just another ripple in a career known for stormy interludes.

The relationship between Vargas and Pecora began when Vargas was a young amateur sensation out of Oxnard, and Pecora, a Camarillo businessman, arranged for him to make an appearance in his cell phone store. Pecora, a man in his 40s, became friends with the teenaged Vargas. They stayed in touch, and Pecora became part of the Vargas circus.

As Vargas' star rose, there always seemed to be people around him—lawyers, advisors, various managers and financial gurus, plus an ever growing contingent of old Oxnard buddies who simply wanted to stand next to the fire of "El Feroz." When Vargas matured and thinned out the ranks of his entourage, he kept Pecora close. "He seemed cool," Vargas said. Vargas credited Pecora with showing him how promoters skimmed off the top of his hard-earned fortune. Vargas claimed Pecora was one of the few people he trusted and posted Pecora's picture on his official website in the section called "family." In interviews he referred to Pecora as "my man, Joe" and bragged about how lucky he was to have a good friend looking after him.

Pecora also encouraged Vargas to make money outside of boxing. Suddenly, the rough kid from Oxnard was talking about buying property and creating portfolios. There was a clothing line, a communications store, a record label, and many other businesses, all under Vargas' name. Vargas never pretended to be a brilliant businessman. He referred to himself as a simple guy trying to make a buck, but he seemed happy. He had money coming in every month from ventures that didn't involve boxing. By his late 20s, a bad back and a weight problem had made the sport increasingly difficult for him, so Vargas was grateful for Pecora's business help. Pecora even introduced him to Hollywood agent Jack Gilardi so Vargas could take small parts in movies. When Vargas created Vargas Entertainment Promotions, he bestowed his man Joe with the title of Vice President.

"And he was stealing the whole time," alleged Vargas.

In 2009, Vargas named Pecora in a 59-page civil complaint that included claims of fraud, breach of oral contract, and professional negligence. Also named in the complaint were accountants from CBIZ Tax, a nationwide accounting firm, and Pecora's daughter, Christina. Charges against Pecora's daughter were dismissed, but Joe Pecora remained the center of the investigation. Sheriff's Captain Ross Bonfiglio told *The Ventura County Star*, "After a lengthy investigation, evidence was uncovered to support … Mr. Vargas' allegations."

Pecora was ultimately accused of stealing nearly a half-million dollars. Vargas allegedly lost hundreds of thousands more because of Pecora's mismanagement. Among Vargas' many allegations was that the defendants had falsely assured Vargas that he was financially healthy, that regulations were in place to prevent theft, that Pecora tricked Vargas into signing blank checks made out to unauthorized recipients, that numerous forged checks had been drawn against Vargas' account, and that the defendants used the money to buy condominiums in Miami.

Pecora pleaded not guilty and was released on $30,000 bail. "I am totally innocent of all charges, period," Pecora said. But Pecora was booked again four months later, this time with added charges, including failure to appear in court while on bail. At press time, he was held at the Ventura County Jail awaiting a March jury trial.

Vargas eventually settled with the other defendants, but on Fernandovargas.com, Pecora's picture was obliterated by a giant red X, and the words "No Longer Involved With Ferocious: Beware."

Vargas' attorney, Greg Ramirez, announced last summer that Vargas was in such dire financial straits that he had to move out of his home in Southern California and would probably have to come out of retirement and fight again just to feed his family. It sounded a bit melodramatic, as if Ramirez was building his case against Pecora in public. But when it was announced early this year that Vargas was coming out of retirement to box again, people naturally assumed Vargas' comeback was simply a by-product of a financial wipeout. Meanwhile, Vargas insists his return would've happened regardless of the situation with Pecora.

"I was basically tired of boxing," Vargas said of his retirement in 2007. "I'd been doing it since I was 10 years old. I'd accomplished

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

DOWNHILL SLIDE
Vargas lost three fights in a row before hanging up his gloves in November 2007, after Ricardo Mayorga beat him (top). That loss was preceded by a sixth-round knockout suffered at the hands of Shane Mosley (bottom) in July 2006. Mosley had also stopped him earlier the same year.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

a lot, but it wasn't fun no more. It was just a job. But time goes by and you start looking at your gloves. You start looking at old tapes of your fights. You see your robes. I thought: *I am still young. I'm 33. I did a lot at a young age. Damn, I'm younger than Floyd [Mayweather].*

"So I talked it over with my wife. The one person who doesn't lie to me is my wife. I want to fight two more years and then concentrate on promoting."

Vargas' last bout, a loss to Ricardo Mayorga, was under the VEP banner, and rumors surfaced throughout 2009 that Vargas might return fighting just to publicize VEP. That same year, Vargas attended Roy Englebrecht's Fight Promoter's University, a three-day seminar on the art and business of promoting boxing. The same month Pecora was first arrested, Vargas co-promoted with Englebrecht a boxing show in Lindsey, California. He admits that fighting Buchanan is purely about the building of VEP.

"If I wasn't the promoter, I wouldn't do it," Vargas said of the event called "The Return of the Aztec Warrior," another co-promotion with Englebrecht. "There's no better feeling in the world for a fighter than to know he's promoting himself. I never knew what was going on before. I'd just show up to fight, put the other guy to sleep, and say, 'Where is my money?' I had no idea what went on behind the scenes. Now, I am learning. Englebrecht is an example of the sort of man I want to work with."

Vargas denies that he's broke. He said his attorney's dramatic comments were designed "to make Joe sound even worse than he is. Believe me, I'm fine. I have buildings all over the place."

Pecora, though, has claimed that Vargas has had money trouble since 2005. "He spent money faster than he could make it—cars, homes, jewelry, lavish weekends with his buddies, paying for flights for everybody to go to Tucson," Pecora told the *Ventura County Star*. According to sheriff's officials, Pecora had access to Vargas' bank accounts and "was involved in the grand theft and forgery of one or more of those accounts," but Pecora claimed to have had no access to Vargas' accounts and has since described Vargas as a paranoid, "vindictive" man.

"Everybody who's ever been involved with him he thinks has stolen from him," Pecora said, claiming Vargas has fired a number of bookkeepers and accountants in the past. "And nobody steals from him."

Vargas does have a reputation for making sweeping changes within his inner circle, but he would say that a lot of fighters do the same thing. And he has found himself in some strange legal battles. In 2009, he took his own mother to court over a property dispute.

NEW TRAINER FOR VARGAS

Fernando Vargas has surrounded himself with new people for his next foray into boxing, including new trainer, Floyd Mayweather Sr.

"He's an awesome individual," Vargas told THE RING. "He keeps you from messing around. I can't believe the stuff he's put into my head. His way of training is very complicated. I can't really explain it, but he has me doing things I've never thought about. I'm catching counters and trying combinations I never tried before.

"When you think about his son, you know why his son is so good, because he's been training that way his whole life. It's a very intelligent style. In boxing, there are a lot of great fighters, but not all of them make it. That's because they can't stay focused. Floyd Mayweather Sr. knows that the most important part of boxing is focus."

Vargas, who lost three bouts in a row before retiring in 2007, will be fighting Buchanan at 168-pounds, assuming the bout is rescheduled. "That part of my career, I was not at my best because Shane [Mosley] and Oscar [De La Hoya] wouldn't fight me unless I weighed 154. I shouldn't have been at that weight. But still, I gave them some of the hardest fights of their careers, and they were fighting a weak Feroz."

Although the super middleweight class has become a bit of a glamour division thanks to such stars as titlists Andre Ward and Lucian Bute, Vargas didn't choose to compete at 168 for commercial reasons. "It's just a comfortable weight for me."

Mayweather feels Buchanan will provide a good gauge for Vargas' chances at super middleweight since Buchanan went the distance with Ward.

"I'm pretty sure Vargas has got more power than Andre Ward, so if he can get [Buchanan] out and Ward couldn't, I think it's something that would give him a boost," Mayweather told ESPN.com in February.

Of course, getting down to 168 will be a challenge. Vargas weighed as much as 270 during his time away from boxing.

"I have some medical issues that need to be addressed, but I'm doing well. I'm eating right. I'm learning new things all the time. I'm excited again. I still love boxing."

—D.S.

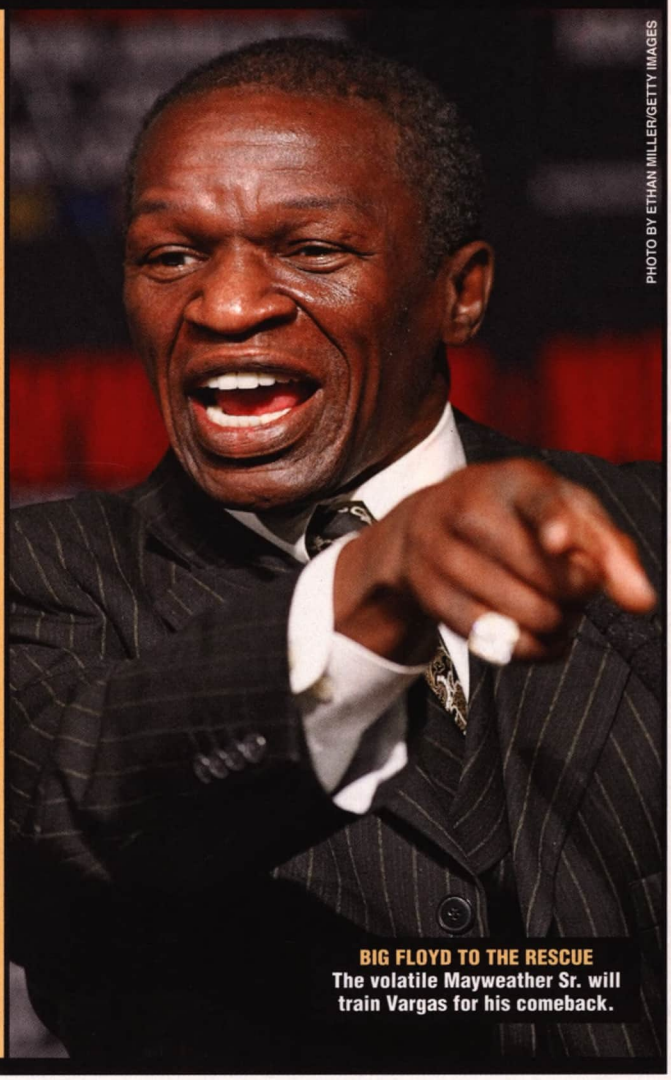


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

BIG FLOYD TO THE RESCUE
The volatile Mayweather Sr. will train Vargas for his comeback.

PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

MARATHON MAN
Vargas, who intends to fight at super middleweight during his comeback, was in good enough condition to run a half-marathon (roughly 13.1 miles) in December 2010.

But to say nobody steals from him is wrong.

In 2002, Vargas was awarded a large settlement after suing sports agent Robert Caron for fraud. The recently deceased Caron, a former personal injury lawyer who partnered with some of the biggest Ponzi schemers in California, was known for taking money from investors and placing it with a crooked Orange County group known as DFJ Italia. The head of that group was Luigi DiFonzo, a con artist who told clients he was an Italian Count with access to European royalty. He promised investment opportunities not open to regular folks. (Amid allegations that he'd swindled nearly $40-million from clients, DiFonzo committed suicide in 2001.) Caron was also in league with notorious Oxnard scammer Donald Lukens, who specialized in taking advantage of women and gullible athletes. (Vargas' mother signed a contract with Lukens back when Vargas was an amateur, nearly costing Vargas his spot on the US Olympic team.) NFL and NBA players were the favorite targets of Caron, DiFonzo, and Lukens, but a few boxers were victimized, including Robert Garcia, Hall of Famer Terry Norris, and Vargas.

The Vargas of 2011 doesn't resemble the flashy spender described by Pecora. If anything, he sounds pragmatic, older and wiser, and a bit weary of always having "to weed certain people out." As for Pecora's comments, Vargas said, "He thought he was smart, but he'll be in jail. And I'm the one happy and laughing."

Amid the sounds of children playing in the background, Vargas unexpectedly began waxing nostalgic about his own childhood. He told a story about being 10 years old, making the long, lonely walk to La Colonia Boxing Gym, where he was befriended by a kindly trainer who offered him rides. The world of boxing, in those days, seemed a safe place where Vargas would find love and support, not the vipers' nest of con men and crackpots he has since found. When asked if his outlook has been forever damaged, his voice dropped to a deadly serious tone.

"I'm very suspicious of everyone," Vargas said.

"He was stealing from me for years. I don't know why he did that. He stole from me and my family. You know his mother died recently, which was sad, but I don't want nothing to do with him. I'll be working close with the D.A. to make sure he gets the maximum amount of time behind bars.

"I give praise to God we found out about him in time. Every night, I get on my knees and I ask God to please take away the people who want to take from me. I will give anything to anybody, but please, stop these people who want to do me harm."

Vargas believes VEP will be one of the great successes of his career. And no one gets involved unless they are a shareholder, which Vargas hopes will be a safeguard against predators. "You want to be in it, you'll have to put in some money of your own. I'm putting in my money, so you do too. If you don't want to do it that way, I don't need you."

Then, sounding a bit like the Feroz of old, he added what should be VEP's business motto. "From now on, everyone puts in a pound of flesh." ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

"If I Was A Fighter—I'd Be Marvelous Marvin Hagler"

He's been boxing broadcasting's white knight since he first began as the studio host of Friday Night Fights *in the fall of 1998. While sports talking heads jibberjabber and try to fake their way through anything related to boxing, fight fans know what they hear from Brian Kenny is the genuine thing.*

There is no sportscaster today in America that is as immersed in the sport as the 48-year-old Kenny, who, aside from hosting ESPN2's Friday Night Fights *the last 13 years, also handles myriad responsibilities at ESPN. He anchors* Baseball Tonight, SportsCenter, *and sometimes subs for Colin Cowherd, hosting Cowherd's radio program,* The Herd. *Kenny may be a jack-of-all-trades but he is a master of one sport—boxing.*

While other mainstream media blow off boxing as a niche sport, Kenny is one of the few that steadfastly champions the sport and accepts all its warts. He's become a stable to boxing fans, not only for his straight-forward approach, but also for his no-holds-barred style, especially when it comes to interviewing subjects like Floyd Mayweather. Some of their on-air squabbles have been Ali-Cosellesque.

But boxing almost lost Kenny to, of all places, the streets. That's right, Kenny seemed headed in the same direction as his father, Charles, a New York City police detective. Kenny even took the police entrance exam and was deep in the interview process with the Nassau County Police Department when he landed his first fulltime gig, in Kingston, New York, making the transition from news to sports.

THE RING Managing Editor Joseph Santoliquito spoke with Kenny in mid-February, just after Friday Night Fights *launched another new season. Kenny spoke about his relationships with Mayweather and longtime former partner Max Kellerman, he relayed some humorous behind-the-scenes anecdotes, and dispensed opinion on the state of boxing and some ideas he feels can improve the sport. Santoliquito reports:*

"When I arrived in Bristol, [Connecticut,] Brian was already on the air doing a radio show. He had arrived at eight that morning, and wouldn't be going home until midnight, after hosting Friday Night Fights. *He's a machine and a close, powerful ally to boxing. It's interesting how Brian laughed at the notion of one day being inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. He's our generation's Don Dunphy. It's not out of the question."*

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

The Ring: What do you think of this new marriage between Bob Arum and Showtime, arranging for the Manny Pacquiao-Shane Mosley to hyped on Showtime's parent company, CBS? Could this mark the return of boxing to terrestrial TV?

Brian Kenny: I don't know about that. I know competition is good. I also know with HBO being so far ahead of everyone else that it wasn't a healthy environment for the sport. It's why I think this move is good for the sport. It might show other places that they could jump up, get in there, and compete. And Showtime is an obvious place that can jump in and show that they can do it. In terms of promoting the fight, Showtime's ties with CBS are helpful to getting the fight exposed to the mainstream. But I don't see boxing going back to terrestrial TV. Actually, I can only see pro football staying there. Think about it. What sports are on terrestrial TV today other than the NFL? That's really it. I know boxing people were hoping so long that boxing could be on network TV again, but network TV isn't network TV anymore, at least not the network TV it used to be in the 1980s and as recently as the mid-1990s. Today, you can be huge on ESPN; you can be huge on HBO. The proliferation of cable TV has blended in the minds of the fans; it's what this generation has grown up with. It's a matter of finding what you want on ESPN, ESPN2, or any other cable network. I will say this: Having Showtime involved at this level will force HBO to compete a little more than they have, but I don't see boxing returning to terrestrial TV because of it.

I want to be clear though: HBO being at the top level of the sport has been good for boxing. It's just always good to have a competitor because it makes for a healthier climate.

The Ring: What changes have you seen in TV sports coverage since you started in the business?

BK: In 1985, when I got out of college and got into TV, there was a huge explosion with cable and a re-emphasis on local news. Now this is where the future is. It's much more in blogging and writing, and it's vastly different from when I first got in. Maybe it's a good thing. Local TV turned into a parody of itself. It's why I got into sports. I was in general assignment reporting when a position opened in sports, and I auditioned for it. I found myself at landfills and at taped-off murder scenes—where no one is glad to see you. As a sportscaster, everyone is glad to see you. When I first started, the general assignment stuff was you'd go to courthouses and county meetings, things like that—and there was a lot of it. That's what I was going to do. My weakness on air was being on-air *(laughs)*. I was a good writer; I'd write my own stuff. But my on-air performance was so stiff. I was awful *(laughs)*. The only way to get better than that was to get thrown into the fire. I spent one year doing news reporting, and that was enough for me *(laughs)*.

The Ring: A lot of today's sports coverage is concentrated on contractual issues and the business end of sports. Do you think that's taken over for the actual coverage of the events?

BK: No, not really. I think boxing is unique in that we struggle sometimes on *SportsCenter,* where we'll talk about the relevance in covering the new manager of a team. We find it more interesting the hiring of a new coach or GM. It happens a lot in pro team sports. What can this guy do to help a team or turn the course of a franchise around? In boxing, I don't think fans are that interested in contracts and the money, unless you're Floyd Mayweather talking about it *(laughs)*. If a guy is going to talk about a contract nonstop, that's news. At least with someone as high profile as Mayweather, you have to make it news.

The Ring: Can print journalism survive the Internet?

BK: I think eventually everything is going to the Internet. Sports fans will eventually digest their media very differently. See how quickly we've already made that turn in the last eight, nine, 10 years. That will change the way it's put together. You have a lot of opinion from a million different entities, and there isn't a lot out there that's reliable. Hopefully, something morphs into something real, but you have to look, you have to look hard in blog posts to find the talent and stay with it, trusting their credibility.

The Ring: Where do you see sports journalism heading?

BK: I see it continuing to be a pretty huge industry that's always going to have people's interest. It doesn't have to be the main sports we cover. It can be a variety of other sports because there's always the human drama in sports. It's a microcosm of life, a look at character, victory, striving to achieve. That always captures people's imaginations. I think it always will.

The Ring: What's your opinion on Olympic-style drug testing in boxing?

BK: I think it should be there for every sport. In boxing, I think it's especially dangerous to have fighters who may be using and the damage they can do if they're on performance-enhancing drugs.

The Ring: During the time you've covered boxing for ESPN, did you have your suspicions some fighters were using performing enhancing drugs?

BK: Of course. I think there have been a lot of fighters that I thought were on the stuff. I won't get into names, but we know fighters who have tested and were caught. To me, it's a matter of the culture being as clean as possible. Everyone needs to agree on that, and you have to have testing for it.

The Ring: What did you think of Showtime's "Super Six" concept and their shorter bantamweight tournament?

BK: I love the concept. It proved to be very difficult to pull it off though. That said, they made a very exciting tournament. The bantamweight tournament has been done before with the four fighters and set up for the two winners to meet. But using six fighters, that was complicated, and it took years. Don't get me wrong, it was very ambitious what Showtime tried. It's hard on the fighters. They've been asked to go through a lot, and we saw the effects, with guys dropping out and not being able to continue.

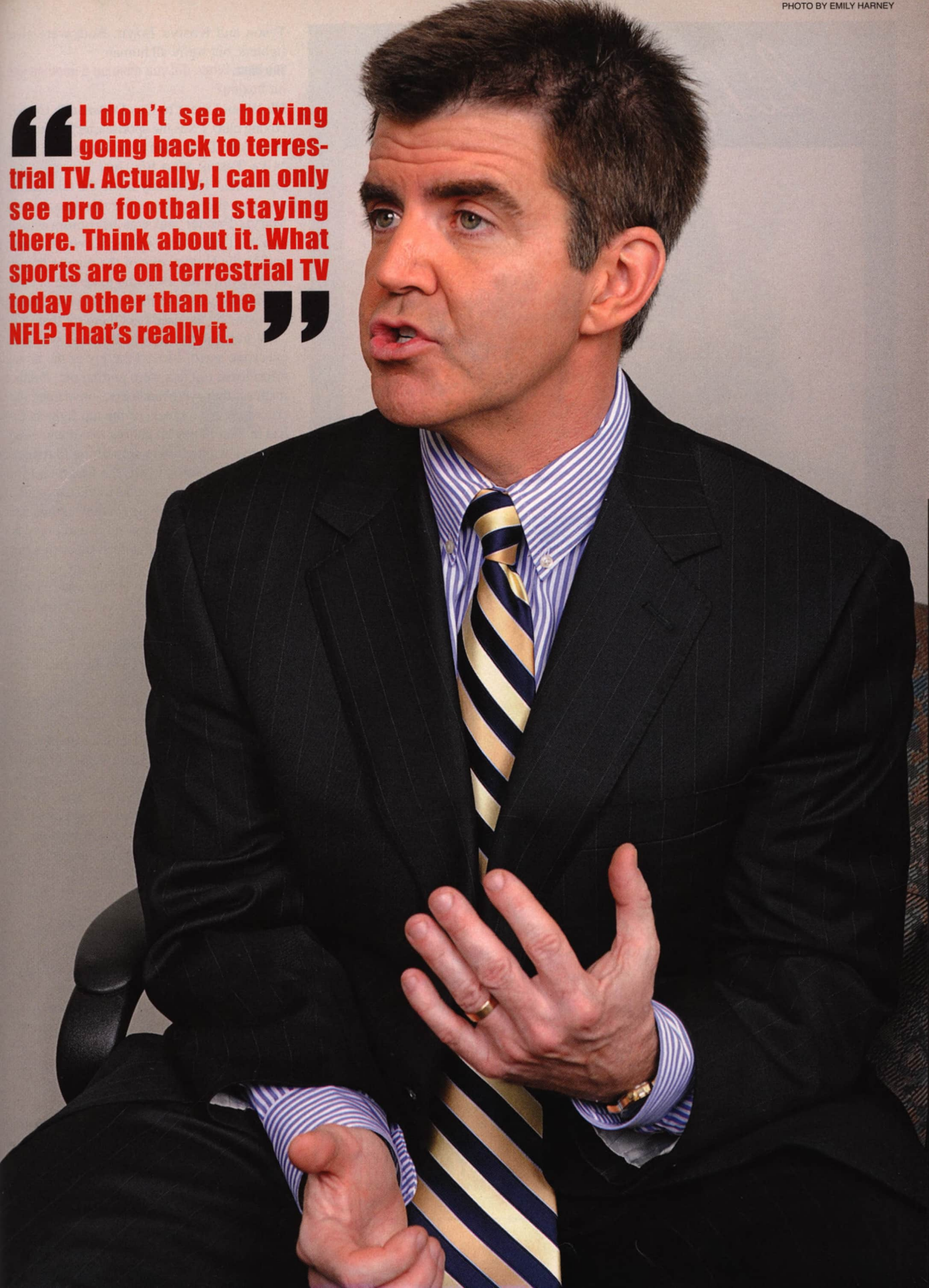
The Ring: To what degree do you think the Top Rank-Golden Boy feud is bad for boxing?

BK: I think it used to be worse. When *Friday Night Fights* first went on the air in 1998, none of the top fighters were fighting each other. You had Don King battling with Bob Arum as the top rival promoters. Finally, Oscar De La Hoya stepped in against Ike Quartey, and they all started fighting together—De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad, Quartey, Pernell Whitaker were all in there. The marketplace dictates that the top fighters fight each other. You have to have top names out there promoting and fighting each other. I like to say boxing is barnstorming. You have no league, no player's union, no anything but rival factions fighting it out. UFC is the only thing there is in MMA. Dana White [the owner of UFC] doesn't have to worry about that. All his guys fight each other—whether they like it or not *(laughs)*. In boxing, you have different promoters and different belts, the marketplace dictates the top guys fight each other, and I'd like to think that will eventually happen, despite the situation with the two top promoters today. Both sides are too smart not to cash in.

The Ring: What is your opinion of the seeming abuse of the cut-eye rule?

BK: There's always going to be a circumstance where a fighter doesn't want to continue, and there will always be a way out. Israel Vazquez got his nose broken by Rafael Marquez, and everyone thought Vazquez quit. Everyone came down on Vazquez because of that, but we found out he had a broken nose and couldn't breathe. So I don't think fighters are abusing the cut-eye today. Even though there are exceptions. I thought Devon Alexander could have continued if he wanted to against Tim Bradley. That's just my opinion. A guy quitting is very overblown, I think. In England, they call it retiring; we look at it as you quit. But everyone will quit eventually. Some of the greatest fighters of all-time have quit—two are going into the Hall of Fame this year, Mike

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY



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Tyson and Kostya Tszyu. Both were great fighters, but we're all human.

The Ring: When did you develop a genuine love for boxing?

BK: When I went to Cus D'Amato's Catskill boxing club. I was the sportscaster in Kingston, New York. I was there to do a story on a young Mike Tyson, who had just become "Kid Dynamite." He already made the turn, and he was just starting to get big. He knocked out Marvis Frazier and was becoming widely known. I remember asking Kevin [Rooney] and Nadia Hujtyn, one of the regular trainers of the gym, what it's going to be like in there. Jay Bright was also there, but Teddy [Atlas] was gone by the time I got there for that story.

What got me [about boxing] was how everyone acted. I loved the joy of the all-out effort these fighters were putting out. It didn't matter if they were amateurs, some club fighter looking for a break, or the top fighters Cus had in there. They all put out maximum effort. I always wanted to do something like that, a martial art of sorts. It was the first time I was ever in a boxing gym, and I found everyone to be honest and welcoming *(laughs)*. I thought it would be all these tough guys and everyone snarling and growling at each other *(laughs)*. Cus wasn't there the day I went up, and I remember mentioning to Nadia how I thought everyone was different than what I expected to see. She told me Cus tells everyone in the gym to act the way you're going to act. "There are no fronts when you come in here." That grabbed me.

The Ring: Who were some of your favorite fighters growing up and why?

BK: Marvelous Marvin Hagler was probably my favorite. Everyone loved Hagler, of course. So needless to say, I didn't love Sugar Ray Leonard *(laughs)*, until I met him. To me, Hagler is the epitome of toughness and fortitude, and some of the greatest moments I've had at ESPN were spending the days with him. You walk around here, and there are some big sports celebrities that come up here to Bristol, but with Hagler, the look of some people is still a look of awe. I got to know Marvelous and his wife, Kay. I went out to Vegas with him, and it's a thrill to see the reaction of people and the incredible ovation he got. Now, he's still a little bitter *(laughs)*, that hasn't changed, but overall I find him to be a warm person who's great to be around.

The Ring: What was your first impression when ESPN came to you about being the studio host for *Friday Night Fights*?

BK: I was excited. Initially, I was the one auditioning people. I was writing a boxing column on ESPN.com, and what will frequently happen when you act as a host is that they'll let them have a dry run at it. There was no concept of the studio show at first. My first audi-

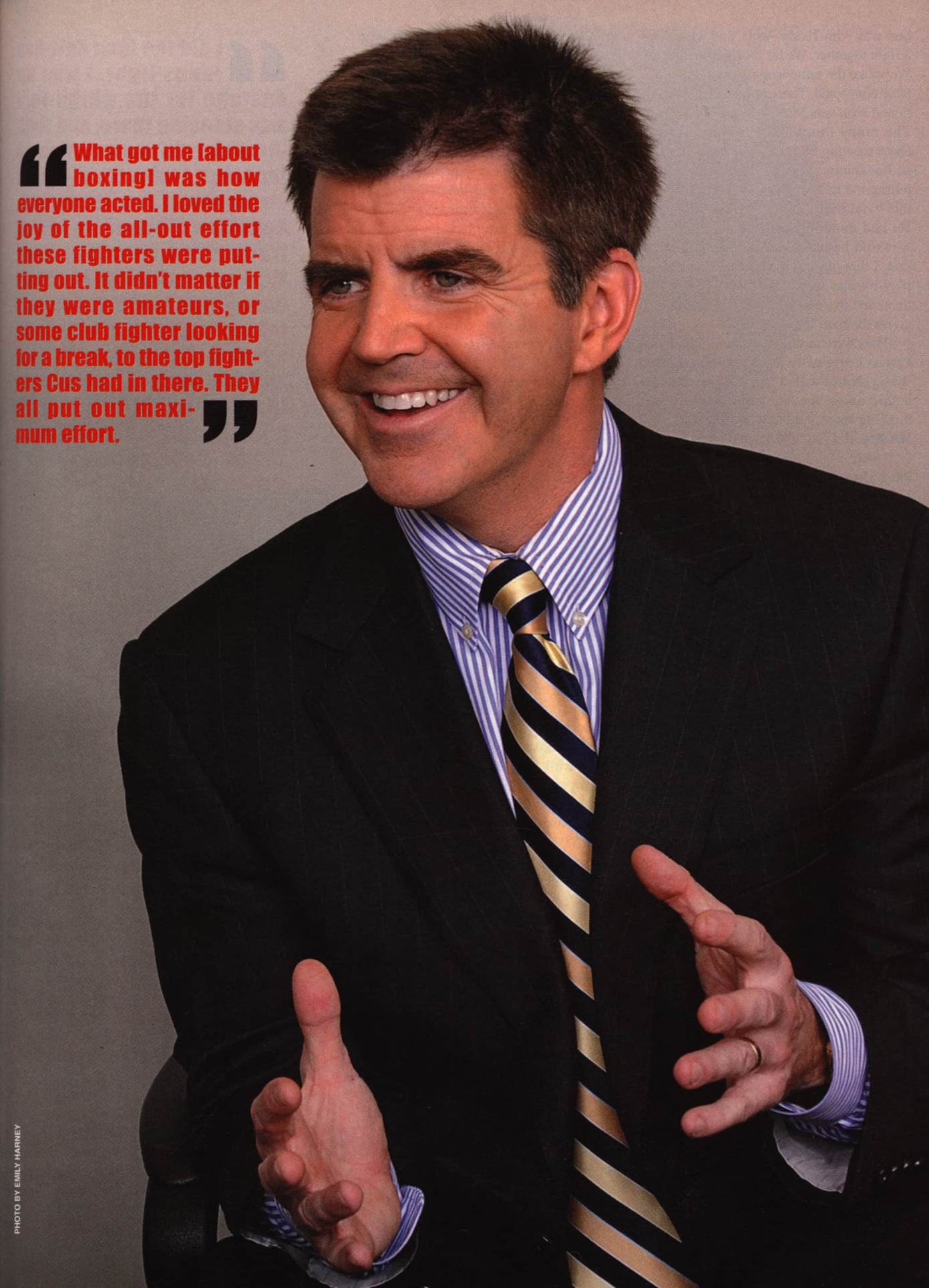


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

tion was with Teddy Atlas, and we called a fight together. We hit it off immediately. We spoke the same language and immediately connected. The second person I auditioned with was Max Kellerman *(laughs)*. The funny thing is that I wasn't crazy about meeting Max at first because he was so bodacious *(laughs)*. I remember him telling me he thought he would be doing this by himself—and here I am *(laughs)*. He had monologues ready, and then he was told he had to do it with me. After that, I thought I was auditioning for their play-by-play man. My kids were 4-to-14 then, and there was no way I'd be able to go on the road for 45 weeks.

They were unsure about the studio idea. I wasn't originally auditioning to do the studio show. I wasn't told early on that the studio show was something they were thinking about. And now, here we are.

The Ring: Did you think it would last as long as it has?

BK: I always thought it would last this long because we put on a good broadcast. As long as we do that and continue doing that, it's going to last. It's ESPN, and it's boxing. It's survived quite well. We've survived different permutations. There is an off-season. We also did the big fights library of going back to classic fights and showing great moments. When we started, we always showed old fights, and it's something I miss. We do things much faster, much quicker, and people love that.

The Ring: Do you have any input as to what fights go on *Friday Night Fights*; are you consulted at all?

BK: No.

The Ring: How does that make you feel as probably the most knowledgeable boxing person at ESPN?

BK: It doesn't bother me. We have guys who are out in the field that do that; that's their business. We have different people that put it together. That's a huge task, making sure they have a huge field. It's very different what I do than what Joe [Tessitore] and Teddy do. I sometimes like shorter fights. I like to go in and out faster so we can get back to the studio. I think about the TV product. Making the fights, that's not my business. We have people doing that.

The Ring: Will we be seeing more of the live remote format at major fights as we have in the past?

BK: Probably here and there sporadically. It's always fun to go out into the boxing world and get ex-fighters and their opinions on big fights. I remember talking to guys like Winky Wright, Shane Mosley, and some of the old-time great fighters who were alongside of us out in the field. That's something I really look forward to.

The Ring: What's the setting like doing a live remote at a major fight?

BK: No matter how many times you've done it and how prepared you are, or you think you are, you can never believe the amount of noise at a live weigh-in *(laughs)*. It's crazy. Every single time I do it, I can't hear a thing. You can't hear the producer talking through your earpiece. For that one little period, it gets crazy.

You hear the chanting, and you think you're ready for the noise *(laughs)*. When the roar hits, you can't hear a thing. No amount of volume, it doesn't matter, you can't hear. At that point, you have to go and keep speaking and try to do the best that you can.

The Ring: Any weigh-in ever get too crazy?

BK: Oh yeah *(laughs)*. I did the John Ruiz-Roy Jones fight. I was up onstage for the weigh-in. I was standing there, and then there was this commotion on the stage. I think they got into an argument over the gloves, and Alton Merkerson, Jones' trainer, came rushing over. Merk just nailed Stoney [Norman Stone, Ruiz' trainer]. I felt the impact over my shoulder, and that's when I turned and saw someone going over the platform. It was Stoney, and, of course, the clip was shown 10 million times *(laughs)*.

Later, I called my wife, Nicole, and asked her if she saw what happened. I told her there was a punch thrown over my shoulder, and she asked me if I handled myself well *(laughs)*, or did I look like "TV guy with a microphone in his hand." I remember looking around that stage, and all I saw were trained fighters. And me *(laughs)*. I'm trying to sound tough to her, that I handled it well. She sees the clip and calls me back—"You looked like TV guy with a microphone in his hand." I admit I looked like TV guy. I looked like an idiot *(laughs)*. Hey, if you can't laugh at yourself …

The Ring: Any strange or funny stories from a live broadcast you can share?

BK: This one is a classic. Joe Frazier was in studio, and, of course, everyone has to come up and see Joe Frazier, who's still this charismatic figure. So everyone is coming in with the obligatory, "I don't mean to bother you, but …" approach. And Joe was very gracious and accommodating to everyone. But it's going on and on. We had a studio manager who asked to take a picture with Joe in a staredown. I said to the studio manager that he shouldn't do this—not with Joe Frazier.

"I did the John Ruiz-Roy Jones fight. I was up onstage for the weigh-in. I was standing there, and then there was this commotion on the stage. I think they got into an argument over the gloves, and Alton Merkerson, Jones' trainer, came rushing over. Merk just nailed Stoney [Norman Stone, Ruiz' trainer]. I felt the impact over my shoulder, and that's when I turned and saw someone going over the platform. It was Stoney, and of course, the clip was shown 10 million times *(laughs)*."

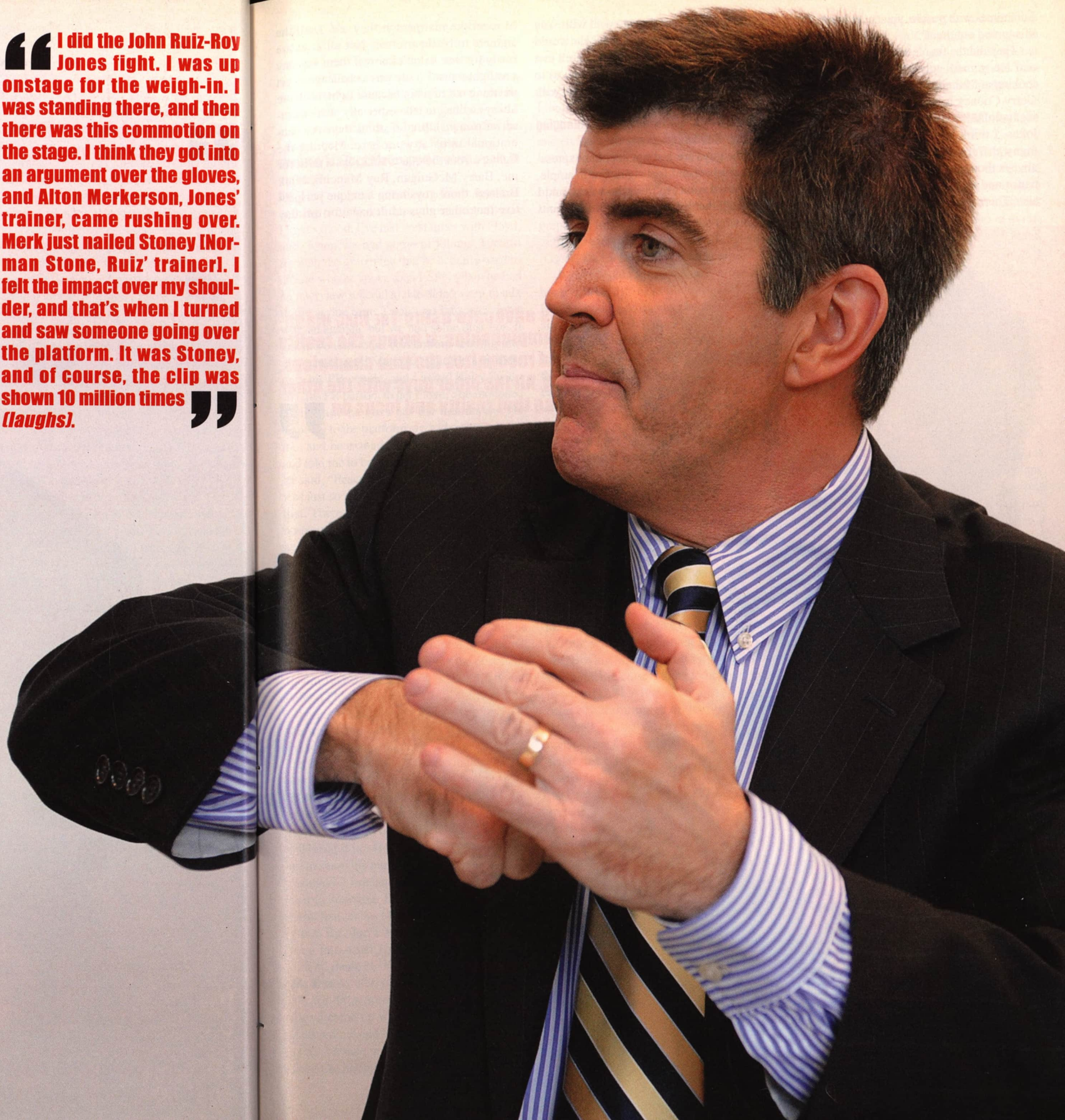


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

Sometimes with people, you never know. But this turned out great!

They did the funniest staredown *(laughs)*, and Joe immediately locked in like he was looking at Muhammad Ali. It was awesome. Gerry Cooney is one of the funniest people we had. He's a true delight, always telling jokes. I think what I like is we've had so many different people come in and you always thought that they'd be high-maintenance and they weren't, like Pernell Whitaker. There were some concerns there, but he was one ofthe easiest guys to deal with. You hear stories about James Toney. He would actually come up to the interview area in a three-piece suit that took him 40 minutes to put on, and he'd come to the studio with sweat pouring all over *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Who's been your most challenging interview subject in boxing and why?

BK: Some guys are just not adept at expressing themselves and feel rigid. For example, Andre Ward wants to meet the world, and I always tell the fighters that the world wants to meet the real person they are. I tell the fighters to be themselves. Not all guys are ready for that. I don't know if there was any one fighter that I'd say was a challenge to get anything out of them because fighters all are always willing to talk, especially about themselves *(laughs)*. But I do think there is a generational thing at work here. Meeting the fighters from the 1980s is always a thrill for me. Barry McGuigan, Ray Mancini, Mark Breland, those guys bring a unique perspective that other guys don't have for this day

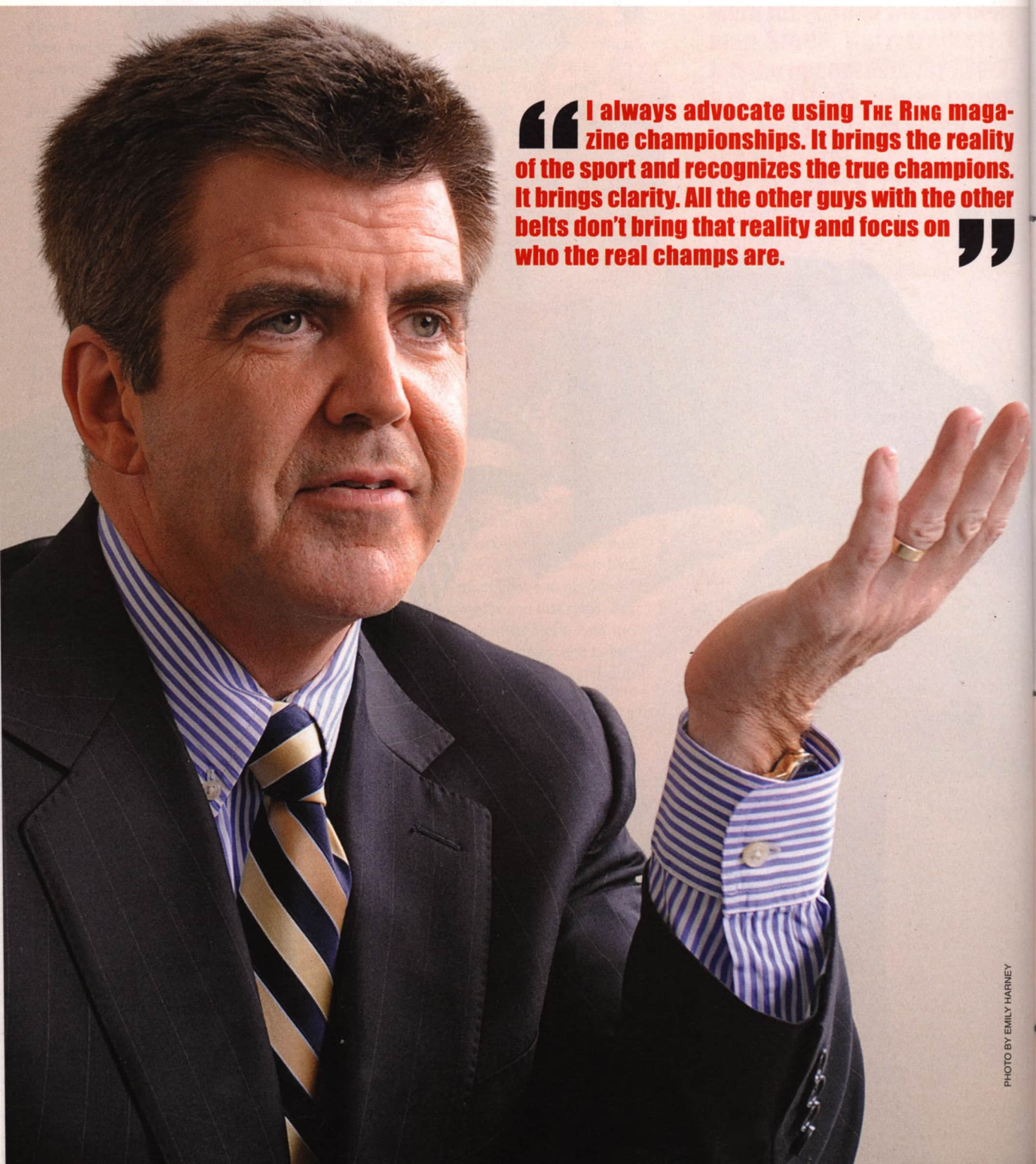


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

and age. Most guys enjoy their chance to speak. They don't have a platform to come out and speak like athletes in other sports. I remember James "Buster" Douglas being a delight all day long. I shook his hand, and he might have been the most enormous man I ever saw in my life—and this was after he lost all the weight *(laughs)*. He was huge.

The Ring: Is Floyd Mayweather really a pain in the ass?

BK: That's a great question. I knew that was coming *(laughs)*. It depends on the day and Floyd's mood. I've had great times with Floyd, and, when we had some problems, I heard through the grapevine that he actually tried to dictate who he spoke to at ESPN when he had an interview scheduled. He didn't want to talk to me at one time. I don't go into interviews with an agenda, but we had some dust-ups. It got more and more contentious leading into the Juan Manuel Marquez fight. He's up there with his PR people, and I asked Kelly Swanson, his PR person, to get Floyd. She motioned to him and he gave her the thumbs up. He came up to the platform we had set up to meet me, and he extended his arms, hit his chest, and told me to bring it in here. We hugged and he said, "Peace and love to your family." He was just so warm, and I told him I appreciated that. There could be another skirmish on the horizon, and I have to defend other people that he's running over—and I will, and he knows it *(laughs)*. But no, there's no animosity there, not from my end.

When Floyd was here, he was always very professional and a good conversationalist. Floyd is partisan—to himself *(laughs)*, and he will always talk down to future opponents. And I will always be defending the opponent. If someone talked trash about Floyd, I would defend Floyd. I told him that. I told him that I'd refer to him as welterweight champion of the world and would always refer to him as the world champ until he lost.

The Ring: What is it that makes the two of you so combustible at times?

BK: He got used to talking to people that don't know the things about boxing that I know. He runs roughshod over different fighters, and I'll bring it up. He's looking for facts to line up to serve his purpose. He likes the sparring *(laughs)*—I mean that literally, he likes the verbal sparring. Floyd learned at a certain point that he has to sell himself. I think that's great. But don't do it at the expense of ripping into other fighters that aren't there to defend themselves.

The Ring: What's your best Floyd story?

BK: We did a *SportsCenter* promo here, and Floyd came up with his people. The promo featured me and Floyd. I was walking by his office cubicle in the promo, and he was supposed to be hitting a bag with my face on it *(laughs)*. Floyd was being a total pro. They told him what it would be, and he goes "Ooh, get the cameras, get the cameras," and he starts whomping the bag with such glee *(laughs)*. He hit it with so much viciousness, I thought he was enjoying it a little too much *(laughs)*. At the end of the day, we hugged and chatted. We got along just fine. We spent hours together.

Another story was after one of our dust-ups. I went to one of Floyd's open workouts at his gym. I don't remember what fight he was preparing for. It was around the time he was getting ready to fight Carlos Baldomir or [Oscar] De La Hoya, around that time.

People couldn't believe that I showed up at his gym. Oh, it was contentious *(laughs)*. Floyd's guys were standing behind me talking, and I was just listening. His guys are saying "Yeah, yeah, champ," and this guy was barking at me when I was talking to Floyd. I told them, "Guys, I want you to know we have one camera. We can't get everyone in the shot." I was surrounded by them, and it was pretty crazy. I always felt that Floyd should be having fun. Sometimes it didn't seem that he was. It's a lot better between us.

Despite how crazy this might sound to some, I like Floyd. He's a lovable guy. I hope everything in his life gets straightened out. You peel away everything, there is a very likable personality there.

The Ring: Of all the many sports you cover, what sport do you think is most like boxing in terms of the politics, the characters, and the promoters involved?

BK: There is no sport like boxing. MMA could be, but, with one dominant group, UFC, it's not. Boxing being what it is, which is barnstorming, the closest thing to boxing, for me, is what NASCAR used to be—a traveling troupe that drummed up its own audience. Baseball, basketball, football, people would come to see those sports. Boxing, you have to sell it. It has to get publicity and the imagination of the public.

I remember covering NASCAR. They were like, "Hey, good to see you, what can we do to help you?" That's music to any sports journalist's ears. You'd walk into a NASCAR garage, they have this agreeable way that they're there for you. It's a very different mindset. To me, if boxing is similar to anything, it's most like NACSAR.

The Ring: Boxing gets such a bad knock by the mainstream sports media. How do you explain the sport to other sports journalists? Do you find yourself making excuses for the sport?

BK: You always find yourself trying to explain the sport. Sometimes, it's difficult to explain it as a sport that you love that has a lot of flaws. The business of the sport will never be perfect. You have to accept what it is and not keep hoping for what it isn't. Boxing is going to be what it's going to be. You see the surge out there with MMA and young fans. I prefer boxing. It makes for better action and makes for a better sport, in my opinion.

The Ring: Is there a fear that MMA may take over for boxing?

BK: I hate to say it, but you see it happening. Look at how many gyms are out there, and you'll find a lot more MMA guys out there than boxers. You just need to look at what kids were doing 10, maybe 15 years ago in gyms, and what they're doing today, and that's MMA. There are more MMA gyms. Boxing and MAA are the two sports that will always compete with each other for fans and—more importantly—for competitors. Maybe it's a reason why we see so many of the older fighters we have today and they're doing well. You can't really dig deep and find many elite fighters under the age of 25 today. That may have to do with the increased influence of MMA on young people.

The Ring: Do you get embarrassed when other sports media associate you with boxing?

BK: No, never, hard to believe *(laughs)*. I think most mainstream sports fans are boxing fans. They want to love it—they need a reason to love it. It's just hard to love. There is no boxing league. It's all different entities. It makes it hard to keep track of the sport. It's why I always advocate using THE RING magazine championships. It brings out what's real and recognizes the true champions. It brings clarity. All the other guys with the other belts don't bring that reality and focus on who the real champs are. Everyone has to focus on fighting that fighter instead of just some random action of an alphabet group that may try and force an opponent that isn't worthy. Like I said earlier, boxing is like barnstorming. Keeping up with the different factions makes it hard for fans to follow.

The Ring: Can you talk about the special relationship you've had and forged with Max?

BK: We were close friends and have been best of friends the whole run during *Friday Night Fights*. He knows my wife and children, and I know his wife and baby girl. We hit it off right away. We had great times together coming up here, like the Friday barbeques together at my house. Of course, I miss him.

The Ring: What do you think made you guys so unique together?

BK: You always want to work with someone who wants to look better—and helps you look better, like a team. You have some guys in sports you hear about all of the time that he makes his teammates better. It was the same with Max and me. I would legitimately get a kick out of Max. The chemistry was there. We were always coming up with new

things, always making everything around look good, look better. Max brought that intellectual spark.

The Ring: I have the sense it hit you pretty hard when Sam, Max's brother, was killed?

BK: It did. I knew Sam well, and it went beyond comprehension what happened to him. I took off from work and spent two or three days with Max in his apartment. I wanted to see him through this incomprehensible agony. It hurt. It hurt me seeing him like that. *I had to be there for him*. His parents are marvelous, loving people. Max is a really good guy. You saw the whole family there, and they're fascinating people. It was just hard on Max, because as the oldest, he took a lot on his shoulders and wanted to be the rock for his family.

The Ring: What's the best behind-the-scenes mishap story you can share?

BK: There was a time when Max and I could leave the set and talk. We had this place we called "the garage" where the *Friday Night Fights* studio used to be, and, one night, there were these 10-round fights. So we'd wander off and talk, grab something to eat. Well, one of the 10-rounders ended in like the fourth round, and me and Max were off the set. Suddenly, you see camera people starting to gather their stuff and we're back up *(laughs)*. Me and Max both hopped into our chairs and it was like wheeling in like this *(glides across the carpet in a chair with his arms extended like flying)* and we're on, "Oh, hi" *(laughs)*. After we filled a little time, suddenly we're back up, and then we were down with a technical glitch. It was quiet, and, in your ear, you hear a producer say, "Hey guys, we should probably stay on the set. You have to be a little more ready." I remember that *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Who were some of the guys you imitated growing up to develop your on-air style?

BK: I liked Jerry Girard at WPIX on Channel 11, the New York City sportscaster. He brought humor and showed you can do anything you want. Here at ESPN, there's Chris Berman and Bob Lee, guys who can play it straight and still have fun. ESPN did have a big influence on me, and they had fun with it. They were playful, and everyone had their own style.

The Ring: You didn't look at yourself in the mirror and do mock broadcasts with a pencil in your hand, did you?

BK: No, no, *(laughs)*. I rarely did that. You do have to practice your standups. I tell kids getting into the business to work on that all of the time. They tell me they're not good at it. I wasn't good at it either *(laughs)*. It's an unnatural act to get up and speak like that, but eventually, with enough time and commitment, you can do it.

The Ring: With all you do and all the hours you log, how do you maintain your sanity?

BK: It's not bad or not as bad as you might think with everyone shuffling in and out. I've learned to work fast. I can handle things. I can take on the task of a radio show, and I really enjoy doing radio, where you can speak your mind. The real star in this, however, is my wife. She is amazing, and I wouldn't be here without her. The real power is the love of a wife, and she's the love of my life. She's nurturing and encouraging. She's always pumping me up and telling me how good I am. It's constant. There is no way you can do this without that type of support. It's all about the encouragement and love at home.

The Ring: What do you do during down time?

BK: I have five kids. It's a busy life, but it's the best life. To be home with your kids and to have your family all there, there's nothing like it. I've done high school banquets, and most kids my kids go to school with think it's cool their dad is on *SportsCenter*. I take my kids to the studio—they're always here. They're 25, 24, and 22, those are my sons at Berkley, and my two youngest at home are 18 and 16, my daughters who are still in high school. My oldest daughter, Alexandra, is a professional ballerina in the Columbia City Ballet in South Carolina.

The Ring: If you had a chance to change boxing, what are some of the things you would do?

BK: I think it would be great if everyone could agree to follow one system of rankings and have one champion in each division. I'm not going to steal because Max Kellerman actually brings up this idea of a boxing league, having one entity and having promoters come together and save their own sport. This way, everyone knows who the true champions are and what to follow. But do I see it happening? No *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Does Mayweather-Pacquiao have to be made?

BK: It would be a blockbuster fight, but it doesn't have to be made—no, not now. It's the championship fight of the moment, but it's rapidly running out of steam. Even if it does happen now, we'll all know it's not the same as it could have been a year, two years ago. It would have been perfect a year or two years ago. It could have floated the sport for a year. Now, the sport moves on but not as big as it could be. Yes, you can call it another case of boxing shooting itself in the foot again, sure *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Does boxing need to be saved?

BK: Probably not. I think things evolve in a certain way, and I personally prefer boxing. What does hurt is that you see the damage that it does to the people who participate. I love the people in boxing, but it is an extremely dangerous sport. You have to look at boxing and the effects it has on fighters. We're much more aware of what concussions can do, especially with what went on this past season in the NFL. We're just finding out what multiple concussions do to football players through the years, but it's something we've already known in boxing. There's great damage done to these fighters. No one wants to see these guys incapacitated 10, 15, 20 years from now.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

The Ring: If you were a fighter, you would you be?

BK: Like most guys my age, if I was a fighter—I'd be Marvelous Marvin Hagler. Well, put it this way, I would have liked to have fought like Hagler *(laughs)*, you know the tough guy that keeps coming and isn't afraid of anything.

“The greatest fighter I’ve seen with my own eyes has to be Roy Jones. The talent gap at one time was that much apart between him and everyone else in the world. The level between Roy and everyone else was monstrous. Think about it, he might have lost a handful of rounds in a 10-, 12-, maybe 15-year period. It’s why it’s so surprising to see what Roy is going through now.”

The Ring: Who’s the most talented fighter you’ve seen live?

BK: The greatest fighter I’ve seen with my own eyes has to be Roy Jones. The talent gap at one time was that much apart between him and everyone else in the world. The level between Roy and everyone else was monstrous. Think about it: He might have lost a handful of rounds in a 10-, 12-, maybe 15-year period. That’s why it’s so surprising to see what Roy is going through now. I remember both Roy and Oscar talking about getting out of the fight game at the right time. And remembering where they were and how they carried themselves. They had it all together, financially, their health. You think to yourself, *Not these guys, these guys won’t do what countless other fighters have done in the past and come back*. Yet, neither one got out early. They continued fighting on. I guess it’s the pull of the spotlight that kept tugging at them, pulling them back.

The Ring: Did you ever do a broadcast in a pair of shorts?

BK: That’s good *(laughs)*. I’m sure I have at one of the local stations. I know one station had a broken air conditioner, but it wasn’t too often. I can’t remember a specific instance, but I probably did. Now, we’re dressed head to toe because we’re doing a lot of standing and walking around. You have to be buttoned-up today.

The Ring: Do you think about carving a legacy in boxing broadcasting, maybe one day being inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame?

BK: No, not really. I don’t think about that at all. I’m doing something I love to do. The important thing is my family, my wife and my children. I do my job and work for them. It’s funny you ask that though because I always went to Cooperstown to the Baseball Hall of Fame with my wife every summer when I was in local TV. I’d go up and see ESPN’s Gary Miller covering Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. I always dreamed about doing that. I actually became that guy for ESPN, hosting for 10 years. I’m able to go back there with my wife and children. I enjoy the town and hosting things from there. As for Hall of Fame stuff and things like that, that’s fine for me. But I’m not holding my breath about Canastota *(laughs)*. ■

WORLDWIDE FIGHT RESULTS

Heavyweights

Eddie Chambers W 12 Derric Rossy
Chris Arreola KO 1 Joey Abell
Deontay Wilder KO 2 DeAndrey Abron
Danie Venter KO 10 Bully Muravha
Franklin Lawrence W 10 Jason Estrada
Neven Pajkic W 10 Johnnie White
Tyson Fury KO 5 Marcelo Nascimento
Ibrahim Marshall KO 4 Ray Acquaye
Chauncy Welliver TKO 4 Jimmy Haynes
Tye Fields KO 3 Raymond Olubowale
Bermane Stiverne KO 2 Kertson Manswell
John McDermott KO 1 Larry Olubamiwo
Tim Witherspoon Jr. W 6 Kywame Hill

Cruiserweights

Steve Cunningham W 12 Enad Licina
(Retains IBF Title)
Yoan Pablo Hernandez KO 7 Steve Herelius
Petter Antman W 10 Harri Hakulinen
Lateef Kayode W 10 Nick Iannuzzi
Bobby Thomas W 10 Joe Paintiff

Light Heavyweights

Arthur Abraham KO 2 Stjepan Bozic
Denis Simcic W 10 Sandro Siproshvili
Michael Gbenga KO 9 Ayitey Powers
Braimah Kamoko KO 4 W Jorge Olivera
Diego Sanabria KO 2 Franco Figueredo
Marcus Oliveira W 6 Demetrius Jenkins

Super Middleweights

Brian Vera W 10 Sergio Mora
Gevorg Khatchikian W 10 Alaudin Murtazaliev
Dyah Ali Davis D 10 Francisco Sierra
Anthony Fitzgerald KO 7 Lee Murtagh
Alexander Brand KO 4 Tomas Rodriguez
Pablo Farias KO 3 Cleber Alves
Shawn Estrada KO 1 Jon Schmidt
Vladine Biosse KO 3 Santiago Samaniego
Jaoued Belghali KO 2 Dominique Bernard
Hector Camacho Jr. W 8 Juan Astorga
Darryl Cunningham W 6 Alberto Mercedes

Middleweights

Felix Sturm KO 7 Ronald Hearns
(Retains WBA Title)
Fernando Guerrero W 10 Derrick Findley
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. W 10 Billy Lyell
Alexey Ribchev W 10 Jurijs Boreiko
Les Piper W 10 Josh Clenshaw
Eromosele Albert KO 9 Lester Gonzalez
Peter Quillin KO 4 Dennis Sharpe
Julien Marie Sainte W 10 Affif Belghecham

WELTERWEIGHTS

Jan Zaveck KO 5 Paul Delgado
(Retains IBF Title)
Mike Jones W 12 Jesus Soto Karass
Craig Watson W 12 John O'Donnell
Shawn Porter W 10 Anges Adjaho
Julio Diaz KO 8 Pavel Miranda
Kendall Holt KO 1 Lenin Arroyo
Victor Puiu W 10 Junior Witter
Tebor Brosch D 10 Samuel Vargas
Mark Melligan W 10 Gabriel Martinez
Antonin Decarie W 10 Shamone Alvarez
Vernon Paris W 8 Emanuel Augustus
Ionut Dan Ion Tech. Win 6 Steve Forbes
Ricardo Williams Jr. KO 6 John Brown
Stanislas Salmon KO 5 Joaquim Carneiro
Joshua Okine KO 4 Adonicio Francisco Reges

Junior Middleweights

Austin Trout W 12 Rigoberto Alvarez
Phillip N'dou W 8 Welcome Ntshingila
Allen Conyers W 10 James De La Rosa
Carlos Quintana KO 9 Yoryi Estrella
Michel Soro KO 4 Roman Dzhuman
Charles Hatley D 8 Chris Chatman
Ahmad Kaddour W 6 Lee Noble

Junior Welterweights

Timothy Bradley Tech. Win 10 Devon Alexander
(Regains WBC Title)
Marco Antonio Barrera KO 2 Jose Arias
Alberto Mosquera W 11 Cristian Ruiz
Ashley Theophane W 12 Lenny Daws
David Diaz W 10 Robert Frankel
Darley Perez W 10 Alejandro Heredia
Josesito Lopez KO 7-Mike Dallas Jr.
Frankie Gavin KO 7 Michael Lomax
Mike Alvarado KO 4 Dean Harrison
Gabriel Bracero W 8 Christopher Fernandez

Lightweights

Martin Haikali W 12 Sam Amoako
Anthony Crolla KO 9 John Watson
Mike Perez KO 8 Marcos Herrera
Fernando Torres KO 7 Carlos Claudio
Jean Pierre Bauwens KO 6 Beka Sadjaia
Ayittey Mettle KO 5 Samuel Danso
Logan McGuinness KO 4 Hector Avila
Pablo Cano KO 4 Jorge Romero

Junior Lightweights

Takashi Uchiyama KO 8 Takashi Miura
(Retains WBA Title)
Argenis Mendez W 12 Cassius Baloyi
Alejandro Sanabria W 12 Rocky Juarez
Guillaume Frenois W 12 Eusebio Osejo

HITTING THE MARK Welterweight Mark Melligan bounces a right off Gabriel Martinez en route to a 10-round decision.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Martin Honorio KO 3 Adrian Tellez
Seiichi Okada W 10 Rikiya Fukuhara
Gary Russell Jr. Tech. Win 7 Feider Viloria
Samir Kasmi KO 2 Joel Durand

Featherweights

Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym W 6 Simson Butar Butar
Ishmael Aryeetey W 12 Nanabeyin Benya Bee
Luis Franco W 10 Leonilo Miranda
Satoshi Hosono W 10 Kazumasa Kihara
Rey Bautista KO 3 Alejandro Barrera
Kinshiro Usui KO 8 Chang-Hyun Son
Raul Hirales Jr. W 8 Charles Huerta
Jimmy Aburto KO 3 Douglas Gonzalez
Kentaro Oku KO 3 Yasutomo Itakura
Rene Alvarado KO 2 Bismarck Alfaro

Junior Featherweights

Akifumi Shimoda W 12 Ryol Li Lee
Victor Terrazas W 12 Nehomar Cermeno
Jason Booth W 12 Jamie Arthur
Rico Ramos W 10 Alejandro Valdez
Jhonatan Romero W 10 Mario Macias
Robbie Turley W 10 Paul Economides
Shaun Doherty KO 10 Matthew Edmonds
Tyson Cave W 10 Nestor Bolum
Jackie Nava W 10 Fredee Gonzalez

Bantamweights

Nonito Donaire KO 2 Fernando Montiel
(Wins WBC Title)
Malcolm Tunacao KO 6 Daigo Nakahiro
Tomoki Kameda W 12 German Meraz
Susie Ramadan W 10 Terri Lynn Cruz

Junior Bantamweights

Tomas Rojas W 12 Nobuo Nashiro
(Retains WBC Title)
Omar Narvaez W 12 Victor Zaleta
Denkaosan Kaovichit KO 9 Yudi Arema
Wandee Singwancha W Disq. 1 Laoniyom
Kennedy Kanyanta W 12 Zolile Mbityi
Mudde Ntambi Rabison W 12 Fadhili Majia
Hirofumi Mukai W 10 Sonny Boy Jaro
Francis Miyeyusho W 10 Juma Fundi
Roberto Sosa KO 7 Devis Perez
Martin Power KO 5 Francis Croes
Sho Ishida KO 2 Yodpetch Pakdee Gym

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 3 Ego Yohan
Edrin Dapudong KO 7 Sofyan Effendi
Tepparith Singwancha W 12 Michael Rodriguez
Panomroonglek Kaiyarn Hadaogym W 12 Dondon Jimenea
Jean Piero Perez W 12 Jesus Jimenez
Noel Adelmita W 10 Boy Dondee Pumar
Denchailek Krathingdaenggym KO 6 Ricky Manufoe
Ryo Miyazaki KO 5 Lookrak Kiatmungmee
Yader Cardoze KO 3 Nestor Maradiaga

Junior Flyweights

Jesus Geles W 12 Ramon Garcia Hirales
Gideon Buthelezi W 12 Hekkie Budler
Yesica Yolanda Bopp W 10 Carina Moreno
Michael Jarquin KO 3 Francisco Meza
Tommy Seran KO 3 Mating Kilakil

Strawweights

Kazuto Ioka KO 5 Oleydong Sithsamerchai
(Wins WBC Title)
Nkosinathi Joyi NC 3 Katsunari Takayama
(Retains IBF Title)
Sammy Gutierrez KO 6 Renan Trongco
Heri Amol W 12 Jetly Purisima
Yodgoen Tor Chalermchai W 10 Rey Lorito
Samson Tor Buamas W 10 Gretchen Abaniel

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Compiled by Don Stewart

Arthur Abraham KO 2 Stjepan Bozic

Abraham notched a much-needed, morale-boosting victory prior to his next "Super Six" appearance against Andre Ward, but it sure wasn't pretty as his necessary tune-up against Bozic fizzled out following a freak injury.

After back-to-back tournament defeats against Andre Dirrell and Carl Froch, any clear win was a stride in the right direction for "King Arthur," and it seemed obvious enough in the early going that Abraham was going to make it a bad night for the Croatian at RWE Sporthalle. Though that's not to say Bozic was getting blasted out when an injury to his wrist left him unable to continue, resulting in a TKO at 1:01 of the second round.

TUNE-UP
Abraham was just getting started when Bozic hurt his wrist

PHOTO BY CHRISOF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Abraham entered the ring in black and red instead of his customary white, a fashion statement meant to imply his new focus. He looked a bit sheepish from under an oversized hood but jumped electrically when introduced to the assembled crowd of around 3,000 fans.

At the least, Bozic showed he came to win, and employed the proper strategy of trying to force Abraham to fight standing still or backward. Bozic just didn't have enough firepower in what was a rifle-versus-tank affair. Bozic was unable to get through with any of his lunges, and soon Abraham was countering very well to each side of the rib cage with fierce follow-ups.

Abraham tripled the pace in the second and continued a well-balanced attack with a thumping series that made Bozic's torso recoil. Bozic never backed down, but, while he was trying to counterpunch, he caught Abraham on the elbow, recoiled in shocked agony, and crumbled to a knee. After consultation with the ringside physician, the contest was waved off while many in the crowd hooted.

In a telling scene, the devastated Bozic apologized to Abraham for not being able to continue. It was later reported Bozik had fractured his left wrist.

"I'm very disappointed because I really wanted to please my fans," acknowledged the soft-spoken Abraham. "2010 was a bad year for me because I was too passive. But it is over now, and I will not talk about my defeats. I have been working very hard on being more aggressive and going to the body. It is very important for me to look good in America and have two more 'Super Six' fights."

Phil Woolever

MATCH STATS

	Arthur Abraham	Stjepan Bozic
Division: Super Middleweight	**Age:** 30 • **Weight:** 169½	**Age:** 36 • **Weight:** 168¾
Location: Mulheim Ruhr, Germany	**Residence:** Berlin, Germany	**Residence:** Res Zagreb, Croatia
Date: February 12, 2011	**Birthplace:** Yerevan, Armenia	**Birthplace:** Breice, Slovenia
Promoter: Sauerland Event	**Record:** 31-2 (25)	**Record:** 24-4 (15)
Referee: Daniel Van de Wiele (Netherlands)	**Ring Ranking:** 10	

Steve Cunningham W 12 Enad Licina

When German powerhouse promoter Sauerland Event added IBF titlist Cunningham to its team, it was a significant step toward formalizing a cruiserweight unification tournament. Cunningham certainly appears to be the continent's finest 200 pounder, whatever continent he might be on.

THE RING's top-rated cruiserweight set the tone for his encounter with Licina with an active jab that landed from all angles. Cunningham looked like a coiled spring of metal muscle, but Licina was in very solid shape himself and was never intimidated despite a considerable disadvantage in the crucial areas of speed and reach. It soon became apparent that Licina was offering a career-best performance, though it rarely looked like it would be enough.

Still, Licina kept his many vocal fans at RWE Sporthalle chanting behind some regularly rocking overhand rights. A few times, Cunningham nodded and smiled to acknowledge that Licina got his attention. Cunningham usually fired a six-punch volley immediately afterward to remind the judges and the crowd who was in control.

Licina didn't win many rounds, but he made many of them close. The unflappable Cunningham might have been too stoic at first, which allowed Licina to get into a confident rhythm.

Ultimately, however, Cunningham was just too fast and too slick. By the final frames, he was timing Licina and coming in with short, snapping crosses that caused Licina to begin following him around ineffectively.

The wide decision was justified, but it was still a very good fight. The scores were as follows: Howard Foster (England) 118-110, Dave Parris (England) 117-111, Manuel Palomo (Spain) 115-113, all for Cunningham, who made the initial defense of his second IBF reign. THE RING saw it 118-111 for Cunningham.

"I caught the flu when I first got here, and I've been coughing all week. But I pushed through," said an unruffled Cunningham. "He caught me a couple times, and I had to dig in a bit. But I was taking his energy from the body, so he really didn't hurt me. 'The USS Cunningham' can do whatever the mission takes. Now the plan is unification, unification, unification."

If that's how Cunningham looks with the flu these days, opponents better hope he's never healthier.

Cunningham's image wasn't on much of the card's promotional material, and his fight wasn't scheduled as part of the live broadcast, but he continued to make a strong impression with the fans here. Popular WBO kingpin Marco Huck was ringside to help stoke the fires for a rematch of Cunningham's 12th round kayo victory in 2007.

Cunningham-Huck II would be pretty huge in Germany right now, and, if it comes as the finale of a tournament, Sauerland may need a Klitschko-sized soccer stadium for the crowd.

Phil Woolever

MATCH STATS

Division: Cruiserweight
Location: Mulheim Ruhr, Germany
Date: February 12, 2011
Promoter: Sauerland Event
Referee: Charles Fitch (USA)

Steve Cunningham
Age: 34 • **Weight:** 198½
Residence: Philadelphia, PA
Birthplace: Philadelphia, PA
Record: 24-2 (12)
RING Ranking: 1

Enad Licina
Age: 31 • **Weight:** 198¼
Residence: Berlin, Germany
Birthplace: Serbia
Record: 19-3 (10)

PHOTO BY BORIS STREUBEL/GETTY IMAGES

AT RANGE
Cunningham pops a long right into Licina's face

Omar Narvaez W 12 Victor Zaleta

It was a windy and rainy night at Monte Hermoso, a little place close to the beach made especially for holidays in the south of Buenos Aires province. But inside the stadium, in front of 2,500 people, a "Hurricane" was blowing as Narvaez, the WBO junior bantamweight beltholder, captured a one-sided decision against Mexican contender Zaleta.

It was Narvaez' first defense of his second belt, which he captured in May 2010 with a unanimous decision over Nicaragua's Everth Briceno. The fighter known as Hurricane had held the WBO flyweight belt for eight years before vacating to move up last year.

Narvaez won every round against Zaleta, who chased the Argentine with no "Plan B" for the entire 12 rounds. Southpaw Narvaez scored frequently with his left hand, connecting a cross or jab to the head, but almost never to the body.

The 5'6½" Zaleta, taller than Narvaez by 3½" and strong and determined, walked the ring with his gloves very high and chin exposed. Narvaez, using his speed and combinations, counterpunched him all night.

As is his pattern, Narvaez started slowly and accelerated, gradually becoming more dominant with each round. Zaleta pushed forward consistently, often rushing in like a bull, but his stamina and confidence seemed to wane as the fight progressed.

With a slightly swollen left eye that he later blamed on an elbow, Narvaez looked for a kayo in the late rounds. He looked tired too, but only during the eighth and ninth rounds. In the last nine minutes, Narvaez came on again, while the fans stood on their feet and shouted "Olé!" as if they were in a bullfight arena. Hopelessly behind on the cards, Zaleta made a desperate last attempt to catch Narvaez in the final round, but the Argentine remained in control until the final bell.

Cesar Ramos (Panama) and Ramón Cerdan (Argentina) each scored it 120-107, while Ignacio Robles (Panama) had it 119-108, all for Narvaez. Referee José Rivera deducted one point from Zaleta in the sixth round for low blows.

"My promoter, Osvaldo Rivero, told me he is working on a unification match with Hugo Cazares, the WBA champion, in Mexico," Narvaez said. "For me, that is a great challenge, and I hope to fight with him."

Carlos Irusta

MATCH STATS

Division: Junior Bantamweight
Location: Monte Hermoso, Argentina
Date: February 12, 2011
Promoter: Osvaldo Rivero
Referee: José Rivera (Puerto Rico)

Omar Narvaez
Age: 35 • **Weight:** 114½
Residence: Trelew, Argentina.
Birthplace: Trelew, Argentina.
Record: 33-0-2 (19)
RING Ranking: 5

Victor Zaleta
Age: 26 • **Weight:** 114½
Residence: Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.
Birthplace: Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.
Record: 17-2-0 (9)

Kazuto Ioka KO 5 Oleydong

Fighting in just his seventh pro bout, unbeaten Japanese prospect Ioka landed a beautiful left to the belly to flatten previously undefeated Sithsamerchai, THE RING'S second-ranked strawweight, prompting the referee's intervention at 1:07 of the fifth round in a stunner at World Memorial Hall.

While Ioka entered with only six fights, Sithsamerchai was making the seventh defense of the WBC belt he won by outpointing Eagle Den Junlaphan in November 2007.

Ioka took the lead from the outset and quickly floored the southpaw titlist with a short left hook midway in round two. Despite Sithsamerchai's retreating and countering strategy, Ioka gradually accelerated his attack and seemingly controlled the fight, sometimes showboating in the third. The Japanese challenger maintained his pressure and scored with a precise double right in the fourth.

The fifth saw Ioka block Sithsamerchai's overhand left with the glove and dig a vicious left uppercut to the midsection, dropping the Thai in agony. Referee Bruce McTavish, realizing he would be able to count to more than 100, promptly declared a stoppage in favor of the jubilant winner.

The official tallies at the time of the stoppage were as follows: Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) 40-35, Douglas Belton (New Zealand) 38-37, both for Ioka, and Eric John Gillett (New Zealand) 38-37 for the dethroned Sithsamerchai.

Ioka looked patient and prudent against Sithsamerchai, whose usual strategy had been to have his opponent stalk him and then counter with his left hand. The Japanese youngster, advised by his Cuban trainer Ismael Salas, cautiously kept the pressure on the Thai without recklessly stalking him and waited for openings to score counters. It paid off. It was Sithsamerchai who lost his composure, forgot his usual fight plan, and occasionally fought

Chris Arreola KO 1 Joey

In a purely superficial sense, heavyweight contender Arreola never has much chance of looking good—especially after his shirt comes off. But at the very least, what his career needed coming into 2011 was a fight in which he looked good in the pugilistic sense, and he found it by taking on the limited, chinny, and easy-to-hit Abell in a *Friday Night Fights* main event at the Pechanga Resort & Casino.

It had been easy to forget Arreola's potential for explosive offense in watching him plod to defeat against Vitali Klitschko and go the distance with Tomasz Adamek (a losing effort) and Manuel Quezada (a winning effort). But the Mexican-American did have 10 first-round knockouts on his resume, and he made it 11 against Abell.

The first two minutes were fought on even terms, with Arreola applying pressure and southpaw Abell trying to keep him off with his jab. About 75 seconds in, Abell landed a couple of decent straight left hands, and a left-right combination at the two-minute mark got Arreola's attention. But 10 seconds later, the differences in punching power and punch resistance became apparent when Arreola lashed out with a right cross that snapped not just Abell's head but his entire upper body backward against the ropes. Arreola pounced with a six-punch combo, including a couple of hard, flush left hooks, and ref Tony Crebs jumped in at the 2:18 mark with Abell more or less being held up by the ropes. The stoppage seemed a punch or two early, but Abell had no realistic hope of making it out of the first round and didn't complain.

Sithsamerchai

at close quarters. Then Ioka exploded his wicked left uppercut to the midsection to sink the Thai onto the canvas.

The boyish Ioka said, "I thank all people that have supported me: Uncle Hiroki, my father, Mr. Salas, and my great many fans. I was confident of this victory but followed our fight plan to counter the counterpuncher Oleydong. I wish to win four belts in as many different classes in the future."

His manager and uncle Hiroki Ioka, the former WBC 105-pound and WBA 108-pound titlist, congratulated his nephew's triumph, jubilantly adding, "Kazuto is much more talented than I. I believed in his coronation even before the fight. He'll be a good champ."

Southpaw Sithsamerchai, who tasted defeat for the first time in 41 fights, said, "Ioka was strong. I couldn't breathe after his final shot to the body. I'll move up to the next category to keep fighting."

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

WHERE DID HE COME FROM?
Seven-fight novice Ioka on the attack against Sithsanerchai

MATCH STATS

	Kazuto Ioka	Oleydong Sithsamerchai
Division: Strawweight	**Age:** 21 • **Weight:** 105	**Age:** 25 • **Weight:** 104½
Location: Kobe, Japan	**Residence:** Osaka, Japan	**Residence:** Bangkok, Thailand
Date: February 11, 2011	**Birthplace:** Sakai, Japan	**Birthplace:** Trang, Thailand
Promoter: Ioka Promotions	**Record:** 7-0 (5)	**Record:** 39-1-1 (14)
Referee: Bruce McTavish (Philippines)	**Ring Rating:** 2	**Ring Rating:** 3

Abell

The stoppage itself was quickly overshadowed by the actions of Arreola, who planted a kiss on Abell's cheek as Crebs stepped in to wave off the contest.

"I don't know, man, I was just happy," Arreola said afterward when asked why he smooched his opponent. "I wanted to thank him one way or another, so I just kissed him."

As is always the case with Arreola, much of the prefight talk centered on his conditioning, and, for his first fight with new trainer Ronnie Shields, he weighed in lower than he had in his previous six bouts. Stamina didn't come into play in this fight, of course, and Arreola knows he has a long way to go before he convinces everyone this is a new-and-improved fighter they're seeing.

"This is just one fight. I have a lot more to prove," he said. "The goal is a world title. That's the master plan. I believe I'm going to be a world champion. In 2011, every fight is just going to show my dedication."

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

EASY MEAT
Arreola made quick work of Abell

MATCH STATS

	Chris Arreola	Joey Abell
Division: Heavyweight	**Age:** 29	**Age:** 29
Location: Temecula, California	**Weight:** 249¾	**Weight:** 236½
Date: January 28, 2011	**Residence:** Escondido, California	**Residence:** Coon Rapids, Minnesota
Television: ESPN2	**Birthplace:** Los Angeles, California	**Birthplace:** Champlin, Minnesota
Promoter: Goossen-Tutor Promotions	**Record:** 30-2 (26)	**Record:** 27-5 (26)
Referee: Tony Crebs (USA)	**Ring Ranking:** 10	

TIMING IS EVERYTHING
Rojas avoids Nashiro's right and counters with one of his own

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Tomas Rojas W 12 Nobuo Nashiro

Rojas barely kept his WBC junior bantamweight belt as he managed to avert the furious attacks of Japanese challenger Nashiro en route to a hairline decision over 12 cat-and-mouse rounds at Prefectural Gymnasium.

The decision was close but unanimous: Hubert Minn (USA) 114-113, Jaebong Kim (South Korea) 116-113, and Edward Kugler (USA) 116-111, all in favor of the lanky Mexican southpaw.

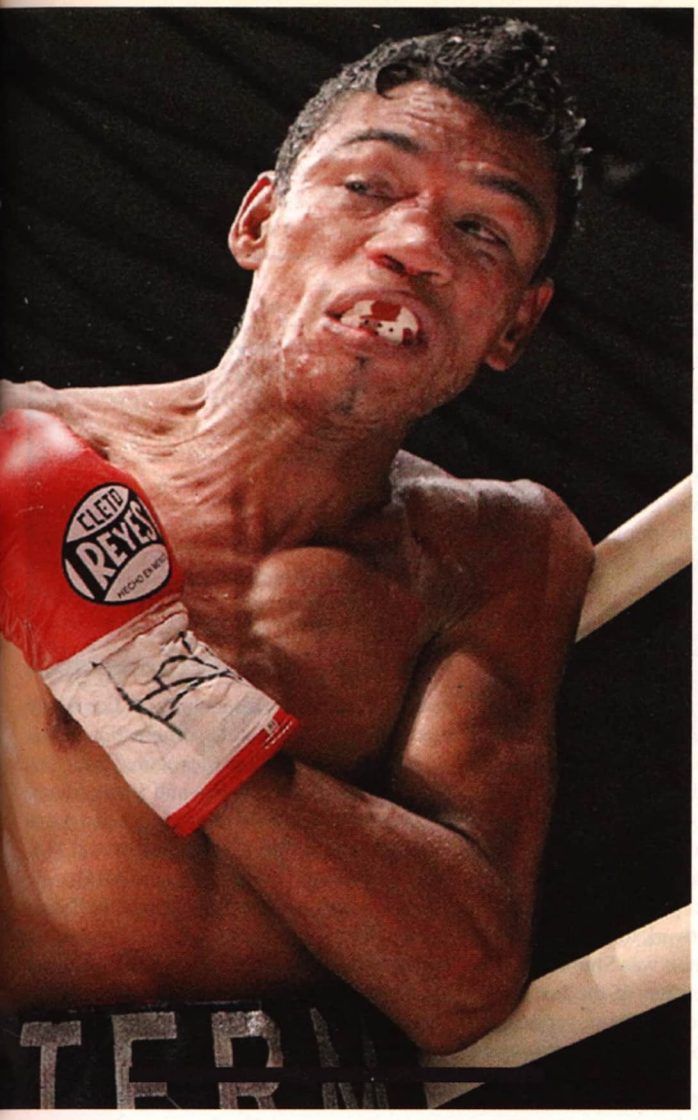
The 5'8" Rojas, three inches taller than Nashiro, began to stick and move and seemed to take the initiative early. Nashiro, a shorter infighter, kept stalking the elusive Rojas and took a point with a two-fisted attack in round three, but Rojas regained the momentum with his hit-and-run tactics in the fourth. The WBC open scoring system indicated scores of 39-37 (twice) for Rojas and 38-38 after four rounds.

Nashiro, a former WBA beltholder, attempted to throw punches in combination, but Rojas' elusiveness averted Nashiro's attacks even if his defensive skills didn't impress the crowd. Nashiro kept attacking, however, and was in command in round seven.

A head collision appeared to have damaged the bridge of Rojas' nose, which bled profusely. It was ruled an accidental headbutt, but

MATCH STATS

	Tomas Rojas	Nobuo Nashiro
Division: Junior Bantamweight	**Age:** 30 • **Weight:** 115	**Age:** 29 • **Weight:** 115
Location: Osaka, Japan	**Residence:** Vera Cruz, Mexico	**Residence:** Osaka, Japan
Date: February 5, 2011	**Birthplace:** Vera Cruz, Mexico	**Birthplace:** Nara, Japan
Promoter: Teiken Promotions	**Record:** 35-12-1 (23)	**Record:** 14-3-1 (9)
Referee: Rocky Burke (USA)	**Ring Rating:** 2	**Ring Rating:** 3



Nashiro was penalized a point under the WBC's dubious headbutt rule. After the eighth, the official tallies revealed that Rojas led 76-75, 78-75, and 78-73.

It was Nashiro who accelerated his attack in the final four rounds. The ninth witnessed Nashiro's right hand bounce off the chin of Rojas, but the Mexican utilized his shifty footwork and body movement to prevent Nashiro from repeating that feat. Nashiro was the much busier fighter in the 10th and 11th rounds, but Rojas cleverly avoided most of those shots, though he failed to tag his forward-moving foe with solid counters.

In the final three minutes, Rojas concentrated on keeping his lead on points without taking any risks and refused to mix it up. He was content to stick and move and wait for the final bell.

Rojas simply expressed his pleasure after the victory, saying, "I'm happy to have defended my belt here in Japan. Nashiro was tough and strong, but I could outbox him with my speed and skills."

Nashiro didn't seem happy with the verdict. "I thought I won since I kept stalking and attacking him. I seldom received any good shots from Rojas. Even if I missed many punches, I remained much more aggressive than Rojas. I want a rematch."

Joe Koizumi

Brian Vera W 10 Sergio Mora

Often criticized for his cautious style, "The Latin Snake" Mora promised to be more aggressive and entertaining under new trainer Jeremy Williams. His ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* bout with Vera proved exciting, but Mora's change in strategies might have aided his downfall as Vera pulled the upset via split decision at the Fort Worth Convention Center.

Though he'd dropped four of his previous five bouts, the larger Vera presented matchup difficulties for Mora, a career junior middleweight. Mora was also venturing into the backyard of his opponent, was fighting for the first time under a new trainer, and was coming off a much larger payday from his pay-per-view headliner with Shane Mosley.

As expected, Vera was aggressive from the outset, while the lankier Mora looked to counter. After struggling to find a rhythm in the opening round, Mora tried switching stances repeatedly in the second, but Vera continued to get through with right hands while shaking off Mora's shots. A Vera left hook in the third caught Mora flush and momentarily stunned the first season winner of *The Contender* reality series.

Vera, a contestant on the second season of *The Contender*, was outworked in the fourth and fifth by his quicker opponent, who flurried often in an effort to steal points. The relentless Vera responded in the sixth by driving Mora back with a pair of right hands that opened up a cut above The Latin Snake's left eye.

Mora began complaining to referee Jesse Reyes in the seventh about Vera's use of his head, and a cut above Mora's right eye later in the round was ruled to be a result of an accidental butt. Told by his corner that he needed to win the final three rounds, Mora attempted to lift his pace. He had some success targeting the body, especially in the ninth, but, for the most part, he appeared to be the more spent fighter as Vera finished strong.

Judges Arturo Velasquez and Erwin Sparks each had it 96-94 for Vera, while Brock Groom saw it 96-94 for Mora. THE RING agreed with the tallies of Velasquez and Sparks.

"I can't really put it into words," Vera told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. "It was a great fight. I just hope Andy Lee wins his next fight so we can do it again." Another possibility is former middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik, who was scheduled to fight Vera last November before checking into alcohol rehab.

MATCH STATS

Division: Middleweight • **Location:** Fort Worth, Texas
Date: Feb. 4, 2011 • **Television:** ESPN2
Promoter: Marines Promotions
Referee: Jesse Reyes (Texas)

Brian Vera
Age: 29 • **Weight:** 163
Residence: Austin, Texas
Birthplace: Fort Worth, Texas
Record: 18-5 (11)

Sergio Mora
Age: 30 • **Weight:** 163
Residence: Los Angeles, California
Birthplace: East Los Angeles, California
Record: 22-2 (6)

Akifumi Shimoda W 12 Ryol Li Lee

Southpaw speedster Shimoda impressively captured the WBA junior featherweight belt as he floored defending titlist Lee on three occasions, while hitting the deck himself once, en route to winning a unanimous decision over 12 hard-fought, give-and-take rounds at Ariake Coliseum.

This one proved to be a thriller as Shimoda and Lee stood toe-to-toe and swapped solid shots the entire way. Shimoda looked much faster than the taller counterpunching Lee, and he seized the momentum from the outset. The third round saw Shimoda drop Lee with a beautiful southpaw left, but Lee got up and decked Shimoda with a well-timed right in the closing seconds of the round. Shimoda bounced back to floor Lee again in the fifth and eighth as he built his points lead. With the win, Shimoda became the third fighter out of Teiken Gym to currently hold a title belt, joining WBC 122-pound beltholder Toshiaki Nishioka and WBC 130-pound titlist Takahiro Aoh.

The third round should be an early candidate for Round of the Year as both men hit the floor hard. Shimoda, a vastly talented speedster, got off to a good start with his swift footwork and quick lefts to the stomach. Standing two inches taller at 5'8", Lee, who dethroned highly regarded Poonsawat Kratingaenggym last October, regained a point with a few accurate combinations in round two. Then the thrilling third happened.

Shimoda, who was floored just before the bell, recovered between rounds and was in command in the fourth, though he suffered a gash over his right eyebrow that would become a nuisance for him in following rounds.

Lee made several mistakes that indicated he might not know how to fight a southpaw opponent. He threw a long Naseem Hamed-like left uppercut that wasn't fast enough, to which Shimoda countered with a precise left. Lee hit the canvas again but was saved by the bell ending the fifth round.

The sixth also belonged to Shimoda. Lee's looping right was slow and less accurate, and Shimoda had little trouble countering it. To make matters worse, Lee sustained a cut above his right eye. Lee's corner got their fighter to adjust his right hand from looping to straight, which resulted in a success as Lee dominated the seventh.

Shimoda, in round eight, threw a sharp left that made Lee sway back and become temporarily defenseless. He then threw a southpaw right hook that hit Lee's neck, dropping him for a third time. Lee, however, showed his pride and courage as he came back and fought hard.

Lee changed his fight plan, opting instead to mix it up with a peek-a-boo guard, as it was obvious that he wouldn't win without scoring a knockout. Lee attempted to throw solid rights upstairs and downstairs, while Shimoda made good use of his fast footwork to make himself a moving target. In short, it was Shimoda who controlled at least three out of the last four rounds as he prevented Lee from scoring a come-from-behind knockout. The last round saw Shimoda utilize his mobility as Lee mostly missed with his desperate combinations.

All three Japanese judges scored it for Shimoda. Takeshi Shimakawa and Biney Martin (ex-Japanese junior middleweight titlist out of Ghana living in the US) each scored it 118-109, while Takeo Harada had it 115-111.

"It was my destiny that I entered the Teiken Gym to learn how to box and thus became the world champion," Shimoda said. "I thank everybody that helped me win the world championship today."

Joe Koizumi

MATCH STATS

Division: Junior Featherweight
Location: Tokyo, Japan
Date: January 31, 2011
Promoter: Yokohama Hikari Promotions
Referee: Rafael Ramos (USA)

Akifumi Shimoda
Age: 26 • **Weight:** 122
Residence: Tokyo, Japan
Birthplace: Sapporo, Japan
Record: 23-2-1 (10)
Ring Ranking: 2

Ryol Li Lee
Age: 28 • **Weight:** 121½
Residence: Yokohama, Japan
Birthplace: Kadoma, Japan
Record: 17-2-1 (8)
Ring Ranking: 3

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. W 10 Billy Lyell

Sometimes winning isn't the main goal in a fight. For Chavez in his scheduled 10-round bout against Lyell at Estadio Banorte in the unbeaten star's hometown of Culiacan, the goals included shaking off seven months of rust, continuing to progress under new trainer Freddie Roach, preparing for a possible alphabet title shot in his next fight, and giving the fans an entertaining show. Winning the fight seemed a given.

But then the opening bell rang, Lyell fought his butt off, and Junior's objective gradually became to just make sure he didn't lose the fight.

Chavez was ultimately successful on that front, winning a competitive unanimous decision, but he did not look like a fighter ready to face a true top-10 opponent for a belt. The first four rounds were all close and difficult to score, with Lyell, aggressive and unafraid, plowing forward, while Chavez calmly countered with left hooks and bodyshots. Both fighters were landing plenty, and neither exhibited the faintest inclination to move his head. Chavez seemed to be a touch more effective most of the time, particularly with a right hand to the body in round two, and Lyell looked a bit worse for wear due to a swelling left eye.

The first clear-cut round of the fight came in the fifth when Chavez drilled Lyell with a left uppercut about a minute into the round. Lyell's chin held up just fine, but he didn't offer up much offense after that, his face growing increasingly marked up as Chavez temporarily took control of the fight.

MATCH STATS

Division: Middleweight
Location: Culiacan, Mexico
Date: January 29, 2011
Television: Fox Deportes
Promoter: Promociones Zanfer
Referee: Kenny Bayless (USA)

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.
Age: 24
Weight: 160
Residence: Culiacan, Mexico
Birthplace: Culiacan, Mexico
Record: 42-0-1 (30)

Billy Lyell
Age: 26
Weight: 160
Residence: Youngstown, Ohio
Birthplace: Niles, Ohio
Record: 22-9 (4)

Takashi Uchiyama KO 8 Takashi Miura

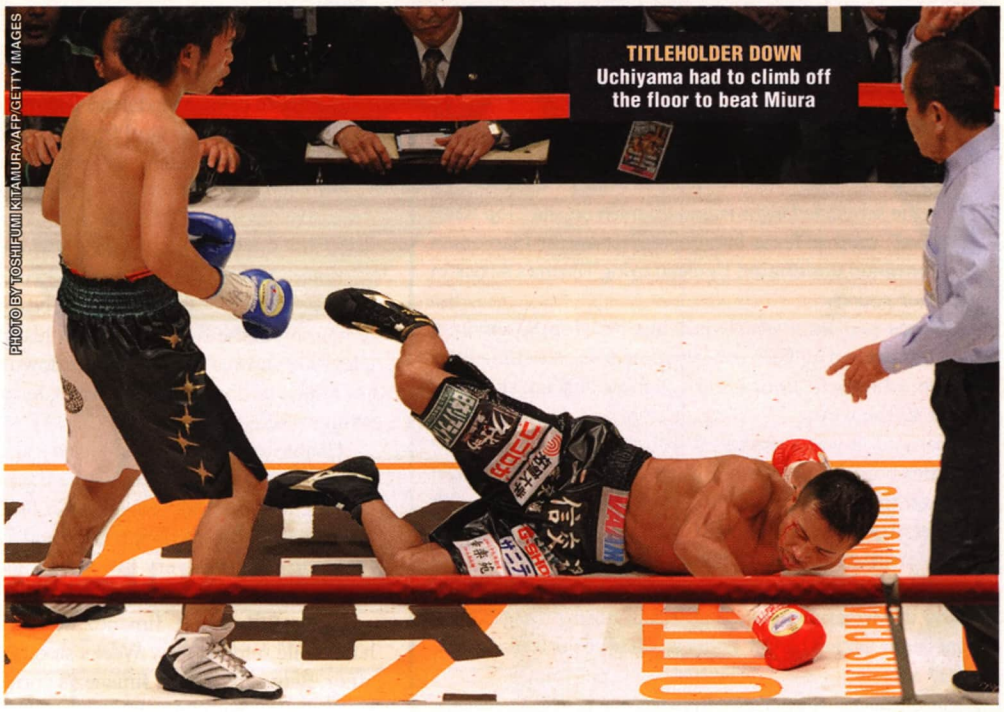


PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TITLEHOLDER DOWN
Uchiyama had to climb off the floor to beat Miura

Unbeaten WBA junior lightweight titlist Uchiyama kept his belt as he came off the canvas in the third, regained the momentum, and hurt game southpaw compatriot Miura with stinging lefts to score an abrupt stoppage after the eighth round at Ariake Coliseum.

Miura's corner stopped it after their fighter claimed that he was unable to see out of his right eye. Miura was so crestfallen that he gloomily said in the dressing room, "Had I continued fighting, I would lose [not only my eyesight but] my life." It was Uchiyama's third defense of the belt he won 12 months before with a 12th-round stoppage of Juan Carlos Salgado.

Fast and strong, Uchiyama won the first two rounds with ease as he made good use of his jab, keeping the game challenger from coming close to him. However, the third round was a nightmare for Uchiyama, who might have become a little overconfident and careless. He took a smashing southpaw left from Miura that put him on the seat of his trunks. Uchiyama promptly pulled himself up but looked much bewildered by Miura's power. Uchiyama, the prefight favorite, also sustained a bad cut over his right eyebrow from an accidental headbutt during the round.

Uchiyama, five years Miura's senior at 31, quickly regained his composure and returned to his original strategy of properly keeping his distance with stinging left jabs. Miura seemed to grow stiff and nervous as he tried to fire big shots in an attempt to repeat his third-round success, but a cautious Uchiyama was a moving target.

As the contest progressed, Uchiyama's versatile left hand became increasingly accurate and effective. Miura's right eye became puffy and later was nearly closed. Miura hung his guard high to avert Uchiyama's busy lefts and occasional rights, but Uchiyama's combinations penetrated his guard with precision.

The eighth saw Miura recklessly boring in to mix it up with the cool and clever Uchiyama, who didn't allow Miura to connect as he did in the third. It seemed a bit disappointing that Miura unexpectedly quit after the eighth, since the crowd still expected him to mix it up with Uchiyama. But his explanation accounted for the sudden stoppage. Struggling to see, Miura had returned to a wrong corner twice after rounds.

At the time of the stoppage, Rafael Ramos (USA) had it 77-74, while Japanese judges Kazunobu Asao and Takeo Harada each had it scored 78-73, all in favor of Uchiyama.

Uchiyama revealed afterward that he suffered a right hand injury during the second round, which forced him to fight primarily with his left hand, although that one hand proved quite effective against Miura.

Joe Koizumi

Lyell bounced back with a good sixth round, outworking Chavez, standing inside, even landing a few good counters, but Chavez rallied in the final minute of the round, landing one particularly eye-catching straight right hand to make it close. It was also in this round that Lyell suffered a cut over his left eye, though it never became a significant factor in the fight.

The action picked up in the seventh, the most entertaining stanza of the bout, and, over the final four rounds, Chavez seemed to generally be getting slightly the better of the exchanges. The unbeaten prospect's hands were down much of the time, and his defense was almost nonexistent. But that was partially a function of the fact that Lyell, with only four knockout wins in 30 prior fights, didn't have the pop to hurt him. Chavez opened up in the 10th round, bombing Lyell with right hands over the first 30 seconds and looking for the knockout, but Lyell proved extraordinarily tough and, by the middle of the round, Chavez appeared to give up on pursuing the stoppage.

There wasn't any debate over who won the fight. Judge William Boodhoo (Canada) scored it 99-92, Gary Ritter (USA) saw it 98-92 (the same as THE RING), and David Mendoza (USA) had it 96-94, all for Chavez. But what was supposed to be a rust-removing tune-up turned out to be hard work for Chavez. If he follows through with his plan to fight Germany's Sebastian Zbik next for an alphabet strap (May dates were being discussed as of press time), the zero on Chavez' record will be at serious risk.

MATCH STATS

Division: Junior Lightweight • **Location:** Tokyo, Japan
Date: January 31, 2011 • **Promoter:** Teiken Promotions
Referee: Takeshi Shimakawa (Japan)

Takashi Uchiyama	Takashi Miura
Age: 31 • **Weight:** 130	**Age:** 26 • **Weight:** 130
Residence: Tokyo, Japan	**Residence:** Yokohama, Japan
Birthplace: Kasukabe, Japan	**Birthplace:** Akita, Japan
Record: 17-0 (14)	**Record:** 20-2-2 (16)
RING Ranking: 3	

TOP RANK LIVE!

Location: Las Vegas, Nevada
Date: January 22, 2011 • **Promoter:** Top Rank

Roberto Marroquin KO 4 Eduardo Arcos

In the scheduled eight-round co-main on the "Top Rank Live!" card at Texas Station, featherweight Marroquin remained undefeated by destroying Tijuana's Arcos in four rounds.

Arcos proved a whirlwind, but his sloppy, windmill punches proved ineffective against the sharpshooting Marroquin, who twice floored his toughest challenger yet en route to the win.

Early on, it was a matter of withstanding the torrent of punches brought on by the wild and wide Arcos. Marroquin blocked the majority of those blows, then fired back with cleaner, straighter punches that found their mark.

Arcos had his best moments in a close second round when he forced Marroquin to cover up and pick his shots. In the third, Marroquin inched ahead, closing the gap, then confidently landed harder rights while Arcos battered pockets of air.

In the fourth, Marroquin leveled Arcos with a left hook to the temple. Arcos got up on uncertain ground and was able to beat the count. When the fight resumed, Marroquin went in for the kill, dropping the Tijuanan with another left hook. This time, when Arcos arose, his legs were so demolished that he did a five-second tap dance reminiscent of the routine displayed by Zab Judah against Kostya Tszyu in 2001. With no reason to let the slaughter continue, referee Kenny Bayless officially stopped the bout at the 1:21 mark.

"In the beginning, he threw from every angle, and I didn't want to get caught early," Marroquin said. "After a few minutes of dealing with his punches, I noticed that when he threw his right, he'd also pick up his right foot. I just remained patient, found my opening, and took it."

Marroquin is expected to headline another Top Rank card in April, while the defense-deprived Arcos was stopped for the third time in five bouts.

Chris Cozzone

MATCH STATS

Division: Featherweights
Referee: Kenny Bayless (USA)

Roberto Marroquin
Age: 21 • **Weight:** 127
Residence: Dallas, Texas
Birthplace: Dallas, Texas
Record: 18-0 (14)

Eduardo Arcos
Age: 22 • **Weight:** 127½
Residence: Tijuana, Mexico
Birthplace: Sonora, Mexico
Record: 16-3-1 (13)

Diego Magdaleno KO 5 Marcos Leonardo Jimenez

A year ago, many were writing off junior lightweight Magdaleno as a local kid Top Rank used to help pack Vegas shows. Sure, he was undefeated and had sound boxing skills, but his punches packed all the power of a gentle summer breeze.

But these days, Magdaleno is punching everyone's lights out. Headlining the "Top Rank Live!" card from the Texas Station Casino, Magdaleno added a third straight knockout victory to his unblemished record.

Proving there's more to him than flair and loud fight fans – 1,505 of whom packed the casino's Dallas Events Center – the swift Vegas southpaw dominated and stopped Dominican "El Tigre" Jimenez in five rounds.

Spurred on by a raucous crowd chanting "DI-EG-O," Magdaleno wasted no time, swarming Jimenez with repeated jabs and straight lefts and, with 1:04 remaining in the first round, sent his foe to the floor. Though the replay on television showed the flash knockdown was caused by a headbutt, Magdaleno continued to dominate the remainder of the round, easily evading the wide swings offered by Jimenez.

Unable to deal with Magdaleno's speed and newfound pop, Jimenez found himself backpedaling through the next three rounds. Cornering his opponent on several occasions, Magdaleno buried his hooks in Jimenez's side and snapped back his head with short and sweet uppercuts down the middle. The Dominican landed very few shots, and those were easily absorbed by the aggressive Magdaleno.

In the fifth round, Jimenez was battered repeatedly by jabs and straight lefts while referee Tony Weeks stood close, ready to wave off the one-sided affair. Between rounds, Jimenez's corner threw up the sponge.

"It feels great," Magdaleno said. "Usually I don't hear the crowd, but this was different. The energy from the fans fired me up. We're going straight to the top."

Magdaleno hopes to fight again as soon as March 12, on Top Rank's Miguel Cotto-Ricardo Mayorga card at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

The loss ends a modest two-bout win streak for Jimenez. All three of his losses have come by way of knockout.

Chris Cozzone

Evander Holyfield NC 3 Sherman Williams

As an event, it was Las Vegas in the Shenandoahs. As a fight, it was defined by the negatives. A full house packed the room at The Greenbrier, an oh-so elegant, centuries-old mountain resort that offers everything from golf to falconry. The tuxedoed and bejeweled attendees were treated to a spectacle of music, dancing, celebs, and a young lady who hangs from the ceiling. And, oh yes, this was sprinkled with the usual record-building undercard bouts, the obligatory bad decision in the lone competitive contest (Willie Fortune-Donatas Bondoravas), and one upset (Charles Davis holding Monte Barrett to a draw in a terrible bout).

The varied entertainment kept the evening lively until the raison d'etre for the whole thing finally materialized. Sherman "The Tank" Williams entered first, to a sprightly Caribbean strain that began to draw the crowd's attention. Then, Evander Holyfield entered to Elton John's "I'm Still Standing." That was true for the time being, but the next line, "Better than I ever did," proved a resounding clinker.

The first two rounds were split and largely inconsequential. Holyfield looked good and moved well as long as the action was under his control. But in exchanges, he missed some ambitious swings, losing balance and stumbling to one side. This sometimes roused the crowd, thinking he'd been hit. They'd see enough of that in round three. Williams stalked and maneuvered for position. His biggest punch in the first was a cheap-shot left hook on the break, but referee Dave Johnson was looking toward Holyfield and missed it.

The expectant fans, waiting for the old Holyfield, roused over some glancing blows in the second, while Williams landed one clean, jarring right. An exchange along the ropes brought an end to the round, with Williams trying another cheap shot on break as the bell sounded. Holyfield returned to his corner with a trick-

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

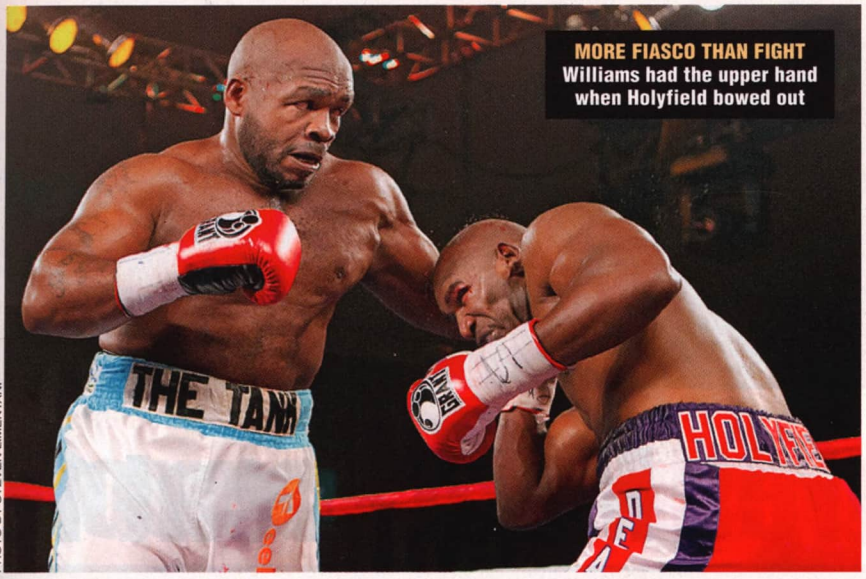
SPOT ON
Magdaleno lands a right hand flush on Jimenez' jaw

MATCH STATS

Division: Junior Lightweight • **Referee:** Tony Weeks (USA)

Diego Magdaleno
Age: 24 • **Weight:** 130
Residence: Las Vegas, Nevada
Birthplace:
Beverly Hills, California
Record: 18-0 (6)

Marcos Leonardo Jimenez
Age: 26 • **Weight:** 129
Residence:
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Birthplace:
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Record: 18-3 (12)



MORE FIASCO THAN FIGHT
Williams had the upper hand when Holyfield bowed out

PHOTO BY STEVEN LIMENTANI

MATCH STATS

Division: Heavyweight
Location: White Sulphur Springs, WV
Date: January 22, 2011
Television: Pay-Per-View
Promoter: ARK Promotions
Referee: Dave Johnson (USA)

Evander Holyfield
Age: 48 • **Weight:** 224½
Residence: Atlanta, Georgia
Birthplace: Atmore, Alabama
Record:
43-10-2 (28) and 1 no-contest

Sherman Williams
Age: 38 • **Weight:** 258
Residence: Ft. Pierce, Florida
Birthplace: Freeport, Bahamas
Record:
34-11-2 (19) and 1 no-contest

le of blood at the left eye. The doctor asked him if the blood was going into his eye, and he said, "No." No one knew it just then, but it was about to end the fight.

Round three was the first significant round and the last. An emboldened Williams went after Holyfield with a heightened attack. Holyfield couldn't hold him off or circle away quickly enough. A swiping right hand was like a magnet to Holyfield's head. Holyfield was shaken several times and the cut worsened. He appeared on his way out when the bell sounded. This time, when the doctor asked, Holyfield reported the blood was going into his eye. The cut had been ruled an accidental butt (aren't they always?), and the fight was over, a no-contest.

The joyous Williams at first thought he'd won, while the stunned crowd didn't know what to make of it. What might well have been an historic career ender for an all-time great instead left him "still standing."

Jeff Jowett

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Abner Mares Main Event 12

Showtime Bantamweight Tournament Finals

After the problems Showtime encountered with its "Super Six" super middleweight tournament, it was probably a wise decision to go with a four-fighter field for its bantamweight tourney. The semifinals featured a pair of top-notch, action-packed bouts in which Abner Mares came off the floor to edge Vic Darchinyan and Joseph Agbeko outpointed Yonnhy Perez by a fairly wide margin. Both winners entered their bouts as underdogs, adding an extra layer of interest to the proceedings.

The finals between Agbeko and Mares are scheduled for April 23 at the Nokia Theater in Los Angeles in what promises

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Rounds Joseph Agbeko

to be another crackerjack fight. Both men acquitted themselves extremely well in the semi-finals and have styles that virtually guarantee more spirited action.

Regardless of who emerges victorious, he will certainly be a major player in the 118-pound class, and, if the fight is as close as THE RING *expects, the loser will also probably be able to look forward to more big fights.*

On the undercard, Perez and Darchinyan are scheduled to box a consolation match, which could very well also turn out to be an exciting fight.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

DARCHINYAN DECKED
Mares battles back from an early points deficit

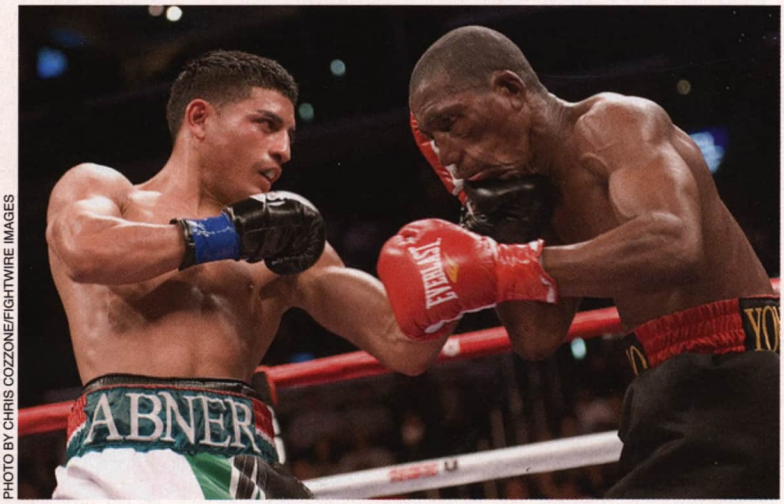


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

UP THE MIDDLE
Mares connects with a left uppercut against Perez

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

DIGGING TO THE GUT
Mares drives a left hook to Damian Marchiano's body

ABNER MARES

Record and World Rating

Is 21-0-1 with 13 knockouts ... Claims an amateur record of 112-8 (84) ... Represented Mexico at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, but lost to Zsolt Bedak of Hungary by a controversial score of 27-24 in his first Olympic bout ... Captured gold medals at 2002 Central America and Caribbean Games and the 2002 World Cadet Championship ... Turned pro in January 2005 ... Won minor alphabet belt in November '07 and made two successful defenses ... Fought to a draw in May 2010 shot at the IBF bantamweight title ... Triumphed in the semifinals of Showtime's four-fighter bantamweight tournament ... Ranked number four at bantamweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Is 24 years old ... Stands 5'5" with a 68-inch reach ... Outstanding hand and foot speed ... Always conditioned to go 12 fast-paced rounds ... Good but not impervious chin ... Suffered eye injury that required surgery and kept him on the sidelines from June 2008 until May 2009 ... Eye cuts remain a problem.

Best Weapons

Well-rounded arsenal of punches is enhanced by trigger-quick reflexes ... Sweeping right hand probably his hardest punch ... Doubles up on the left hook, first to the body and then to the head ... Excellent counterpuncher ... Works the body well.

Previous Fight

Won a hard-fought 12-round split decision over Vic Darchinyan to advance to the finals of Showtime's bantamweight tourney ... Got off to a bad start, suffering a butt-induced cut in the first round and a knockdown the second ... Worked his way back into the fight with a persistent body attack, which gradually drained Darchinyan ... Dropped his foe with a left in the seventh and closed strongly to win by scores of 115-111, 113-112, and 111-115.

Quality of Opposition

Feasted on a series of losers and fellow novices for most of his first two years as a pro ... Stepped up and stopped previously unbeaten Wilmer Rodriguez in November 2006 ... Competition improved in '07 with victories over Angel Antonio Priolo (KO 6), Isidro Garcia (KO 7), and Damian Marchiano (W 12) ... Wins over Diosado Gabi (KO 2), Jonathan Arias (W 10), and Carlos Fulgencio (KO 6) led to a crack at undefeated IBF titleholder Yonnhy Perez in May 2010, which ended in a draw after a give-and-take struggle ... Next, came tournament decision over Darchinyan (W 12).

JOSEPH AGBEKO

Record and World Rating

Is 28-2 with 22 knockouts ... Born in Accra, Ghana ... Won British Commonwealth, Ghanaian, and African amateur titles ... Turned pro in Accra in December 1998 ... Campaigned exclusively in Africa for several years, fighting in Nigeria, Senegal, Benin, and Cote d'Ivoire, as well as Ghana, where he won the African Boxing Union bantam title in 2001 ... Suffered first loss in May '04, in Germany ... Launched American campaign in '07 ... Won IBF 118-pound title in September '07 and made two defenses before losing belt in '09 ... Regained IBF strap in December 2010 during opening round of Showtime's bantam tourney ... Ranked fifth at bantamweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Is 30 years old ... Stands 5'5½" with a 65½-inch reach ... Strong upper body ... Impressive stamina ... Always in top shape and ready to fight hard for the entire distance if needed ... Cut prone but never stopped ... "King Kong" nickname works well due to muscular physique.

Best Weapons

Toughness and determination, coupled with high-volume punch output ... Surprisingly good left jab has emerged of late ... Throws his right hand straight down the pipe ... Slashing left hook ... Applies constant pressure ... Knows the value of hammering the body.

Previous Fight

Abandoned his usual hard-charging style and turned boxer in rematch with previously undefeated Yonnhy Perez, regaining the IBF title via unanimous 12-round decision by scores of 117-111, 116-112, and 115-113 ... This tactic worked well against the hard-punching Perez, who could never put together the same punches he used to win their first bout, thanks to Agbeko's stick and move approach ... Proved he is more than a one-dimensional pressure fighter.

Quality of Opposition

Best adversaries of his early African bouts were previously undefeated Johannes Maisa (W 12) and Michael Kizza (KO 2) ... Stopped Sabin Bornei in London in his first bout outside of Africa ... Lost majority decision to Volodymr Sydorenk by tallies of 116-114, 117-111, and 114-114 in Germany ... TKO'd Fidencio Reyes in the fourth round of US debut ... Annexed IBF bantamweight title by stopping Luis Perez in the seventh round in September '07 ... Made successful defenses against William Gonzalez (W 12) and Vic Darchinyan (W 12) before losing the belt to Yonnhy Perez (L 12) in October '09 ... Regained title in December '10.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE
Agbeko fires a right at Perez en route to regaining title

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

TOUGH DEFENSE
Agbeko had to fight hard to win a majority decision against William Gonzalez

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHT WIRE IMAGES

VANQUISHING VIC
Agbeko pops Darchinyan in the face en route to a 12-round decision

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ABNER MARES

Defense

Agile movement and sound fundamentals are often abandoned in favor of two-fisted attack, but can be deployed defensively when the occasion arises … Resurgent and tough-minded … Tends to fight back harder when hit with a good shot.

Style

Aggressive boxer-puncher … Sets a fast pace ... Seldom throws one blow at a time, preferring to unleashed three- and four-punch combinations … Appears very confident and does not get discouraged if things don't immediately go his way.

The Questions

Will old cuts reopen and cause serious problems? Is he mentally prepared for the biggest fight of his career? Could he be worn down by Agbeko's busy punch rate? Would a victory put him in line to fight the Fernando Montiel-Nonito Donaire winner for the vacant RING championship?

JOSEPH AGBEKO

Defense

Relentless pressure and busy punch rate appeared to be his best line of defense until the second Perez bout in which he fooled everybody, especially Perez, by handing him a boxing lesson … Sturdy chin and mobile legs also play a role.

Style

Before proving his versatility in the Perez rematch, he always appeared to be the seek-and-destroy type … Now, there's a measure of unpredictability to his game … Is more of a thinking fighter than previously assumed.

The Questions

What style will he employ against Mares—box, slug, or a bit of both? Can he become the first to beat Mares in the professional ranks? Will the fact that he has not had an easy fight in several years begin to show? Can he keep pace with the younger, slightly faster Mares?

THE OUTCOME

Unless there is some sort of fight-ending cut, this one will probably go the distance. Look for Mares to win a decision in a fun fight that is close enough to warrant a rematch.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

October 1966

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The RING

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How Did Mildenberger Get There?

OCTOBER 1966

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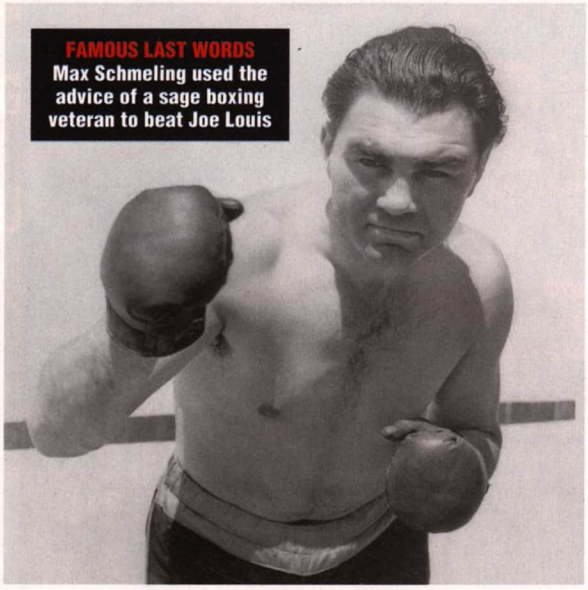
For the period ended August 20, 1966

Heavyweight	**Lightweight**
Cassius Clay	Carlos Ortiz
Light Heavyweight	**Junior Lightweight**
Jose Torres	Flash Elorde
Middleweight	**Featherweight**
Emile Griffith	Vicente Saldivar
Welterweight	**Bantamweight**
Vacant	Fighting Harada
Junior Welterweight	**Flyweight**
Sandrio Lopopolo	Walter McGowan



FAMOUS LAST WORDS
Max Schmeling used the advice of a sage boxing veteran to beat Joe Louis

COVER STORY: "How Did Mildenberger Get There?" J.A. Tree introduces European champion Karl Mildenberger, a German heavyweight who was challenging young world champion Cassius Clay, in a story that details Mildenberger's brief encounter with Clay at Frankfurt Airport. Mildenberger was believed to be the first southpaw to challenge for the heavyweight title. Tree invariably compared Mildenberger to another German heavyweight who once fought for the heavyweight title, writing "Mildenberger is approximately the same weight and height as fellow countryman Max Schmeling, who won the world title in 1930 with a win over Jack Sharkey. He does not smoke or drink." Tree also felt compelled to further emphasize what a quality husband Mildenberger was and how he's a clean fighter. Tree did not forget to state that Mildenberger had feather fists, stopping only 11 opponents in his previous 54 bouts.

Shortly after this issue went on sale, Mildenberger gave a valiant effort against the champ before being stopped in the 12th round. The Mildenberger victory was the fourth of five fights for Clay in 1966, which included a three-fight European tour for the champ. Mildenberger went on to fight seven more times, losing three of his last four bouts, with two of the three defeats coming against Oscar Bonavena and Henry Cooper. He concluded a 62-fight, 10-year career with a 53-6-3 (19) record and never fought for the heavyweight title again.

"Griffith Victor Over Archer By Good Margin Says Fleischer" by RING Editor Nat Fleischer was his account of Emile Griffith's world middleweight title defense against Joey Archer at Madison Square Garden. "In order to win, Griffith had to make use of everything he ever learned in boxing. It was a rough battle in which Griffith was guilty of skull and shoulder work, but, aside from the infractions, he fought all the way like a champion," Fleischer wrote.

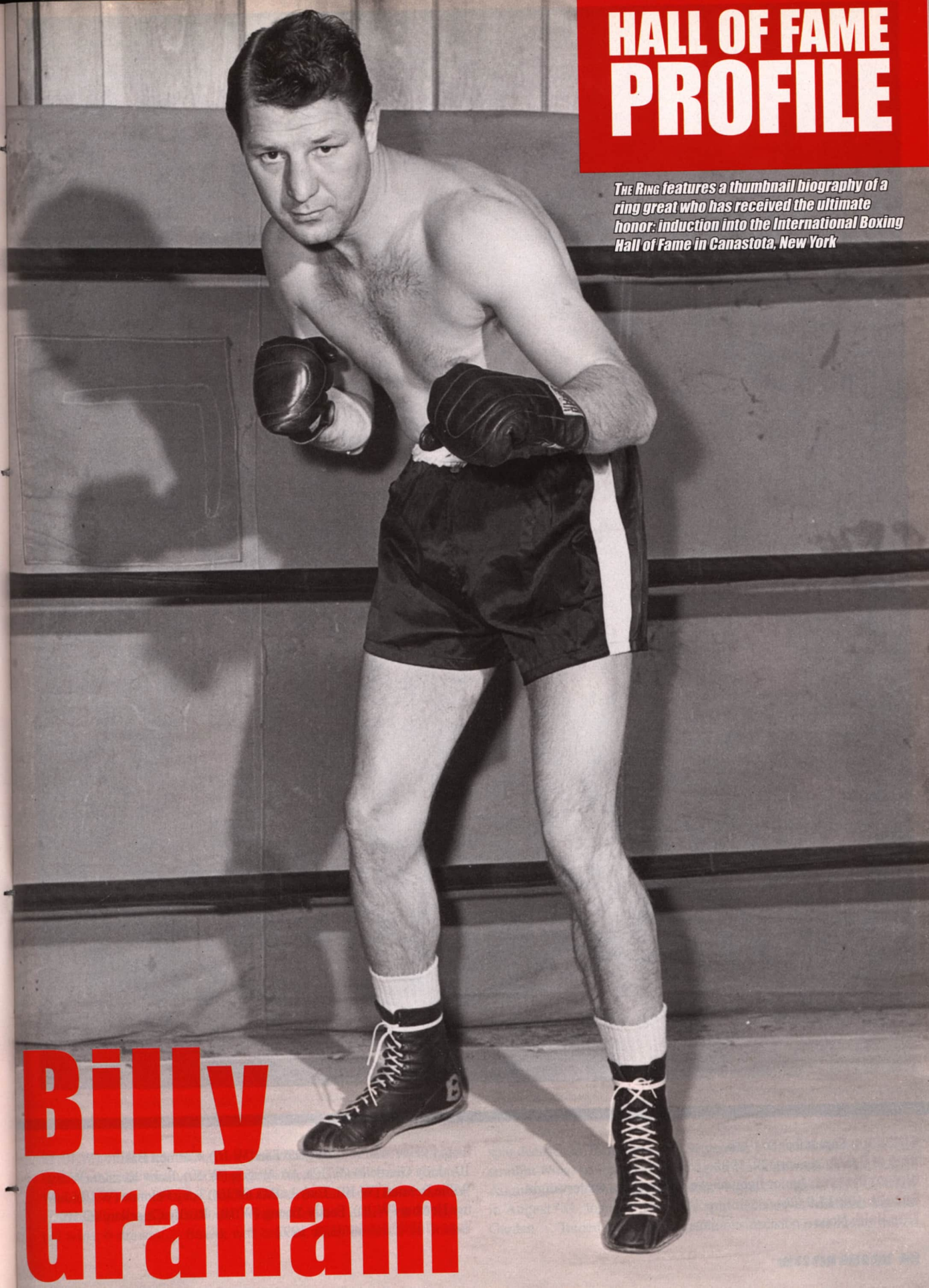
"Schmeling KO'd Joe Louis On Times Square, Says Grayson" is an interesting recount by Harry Grayson who, on his way to the dentist on Times Square came upon an old-time manager, Tom O'Rourke, and introduced him to Max Schmeling, then training for his first Joe Louis fight. It was O'Rourke that unlocked the key to beating the undefeated Louis, stressing to the German heavyweight "bend to your right and keep your head down." This was supposed to lure Louis forward and create an opening Schmeling could exploit. It worked. But O'Rourke never saw it. He collapsed and died in Schmeling's dressing room prior to the Louis fight—his sound advice the last words he ever said. ■

"Clay Draft Appeal Now Hot Potato" by Dan Daniel goes into Cassius Clay's conscientious objector's appeal to prevent his induction into the US Army. The story uses the name "Cassius Muhammad Ali" and states, "it would appear that the authorities have no desire to press the case and do not want to stir up the Black Muslims." The story goes into how "Clay-Muhammad" had his draft status changed to 1-A and how Clay is "getting special treatment." Ali fought three more times after stopping Mildenberger. The "special treatment" soon stopped and Ali was arrested for refusing induction into the US Army on April 28, 1967. He was in exile for three years during the appeals process.

A RED-BUTTON ISSUE
Cassius Clay stirs the nation with his refusal to be inducted into the US Army

HALL OF FAME PROFILE

The Ring features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

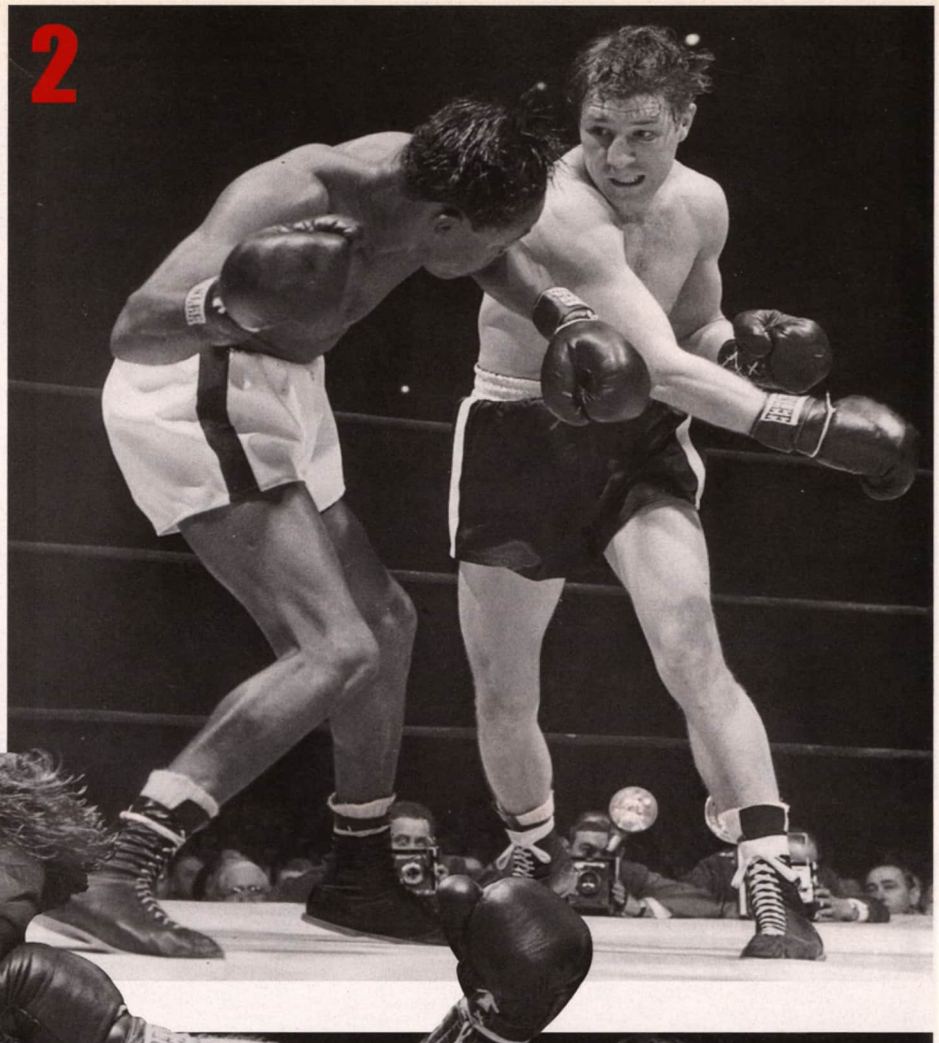


Billy Graham

1

Birthdate: September 9, 1922
Date of Death: January 22, 1992
Weight Classes: Junior lightweight, lightweight, welterweight
Record: 102-15-9 (26)
Title Held: None

Best Performances: Kid Gavilan (W 10), Carmen Basilio (W 10, D 10), Joey Giardello (W 12), Art Aragon (W 10), Ruby Kessler (W 10), Willie Beltram (W 10), Tony LaBua (W10), Tony Pelonne (W 10), Jimmy Herring (W 10), Paddy Young (W 10), Rocky Castellani (D 10)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1992

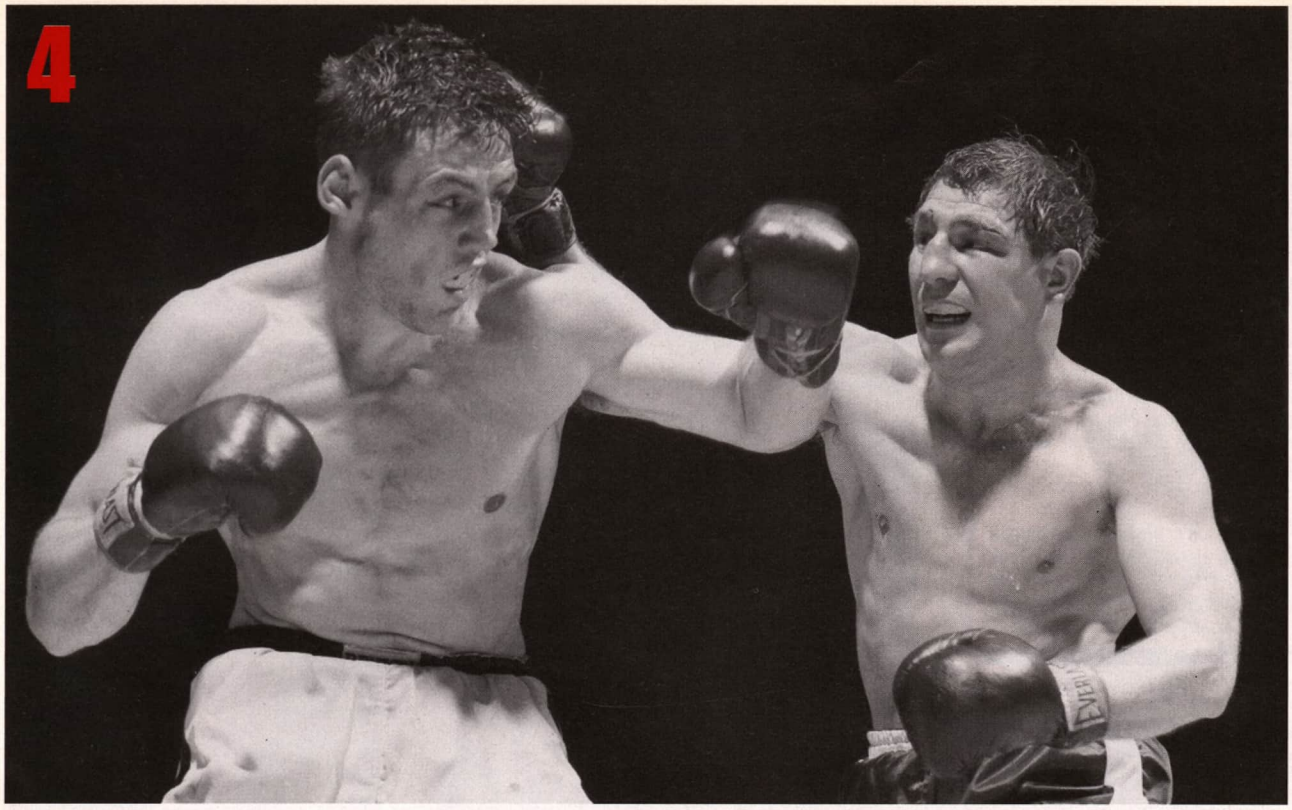


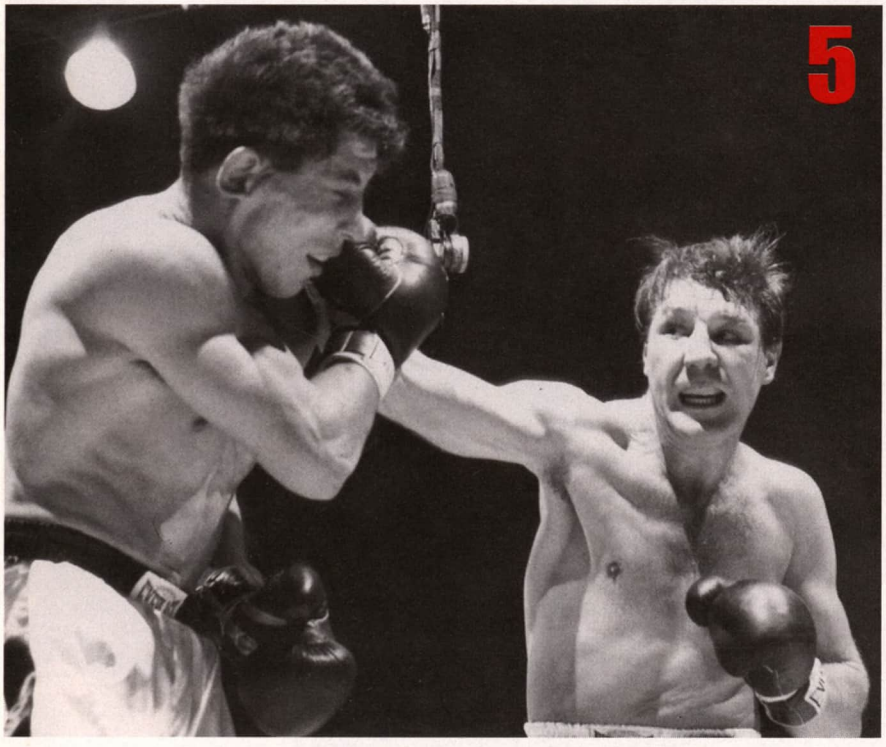
1. GRAHAM CRACKER
Graham unloads a combination at a ducking Ruby Kessler en route to a 10-round decision win in January 1947. The light-punching Graham floored Kessler in the sixth round of a bout held at Madison Square Garden.

2. CHASING THE HAWK
Graham and Kid Gavilan trade during their first fight, which Graham won via 10-round decision. The two met four times, with "The Cuban Hawk" winning the series 3-1.

3. FACE FINDER
Graham displays his boxing technique by ducking Jimmy Herring's left hook and countering with a flush jab to the face. Graham won a 10-round decision over his Ozone Park, New York, rival.

Background: Born in New York City's East Side, where, encouraged by his father, he took up boxing at the local Catholic Boy's Club … Was denied entrance to the Golden Gloves because of a heart murmur … Turned pro in April 1941 and went undefeated in his first 58 fights (52 wins, 6 draws) … Streak was broken when he lost a 10-round split decision to Tony Pellone in September 1945 … Following seven-straight wins, he lost to Pellone again via controversial decision in August '46 … Challenged welterweight champion Kid Gavilan in August '51, losing a 15-round split decision at Madison Square Garden … Tallied a 10-round unanimous decision over future welter





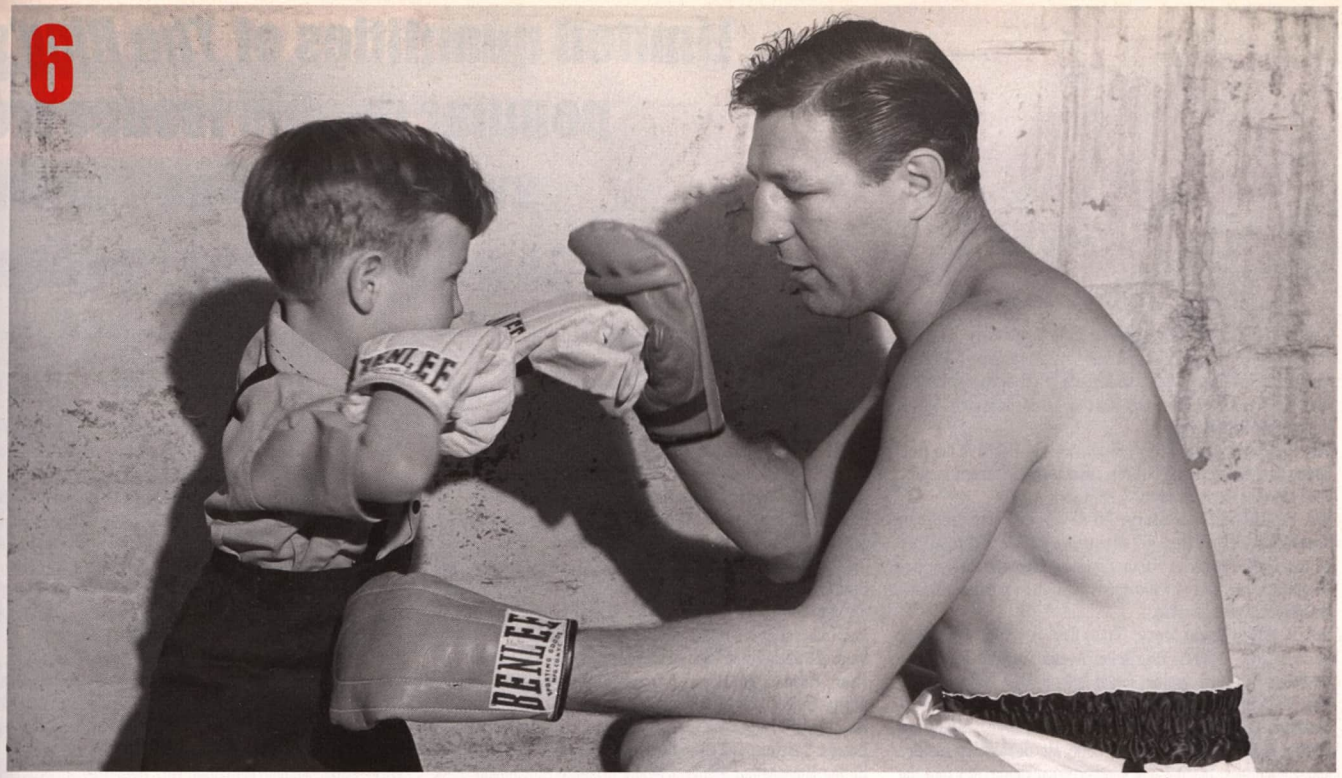
4. WELTER VS. MIDDLEWEIGHT
Graham (right) trades punches with middleweight contender Rocky Castellani in a May 1952 bout at MSG. The match ended in a 10-round draw.

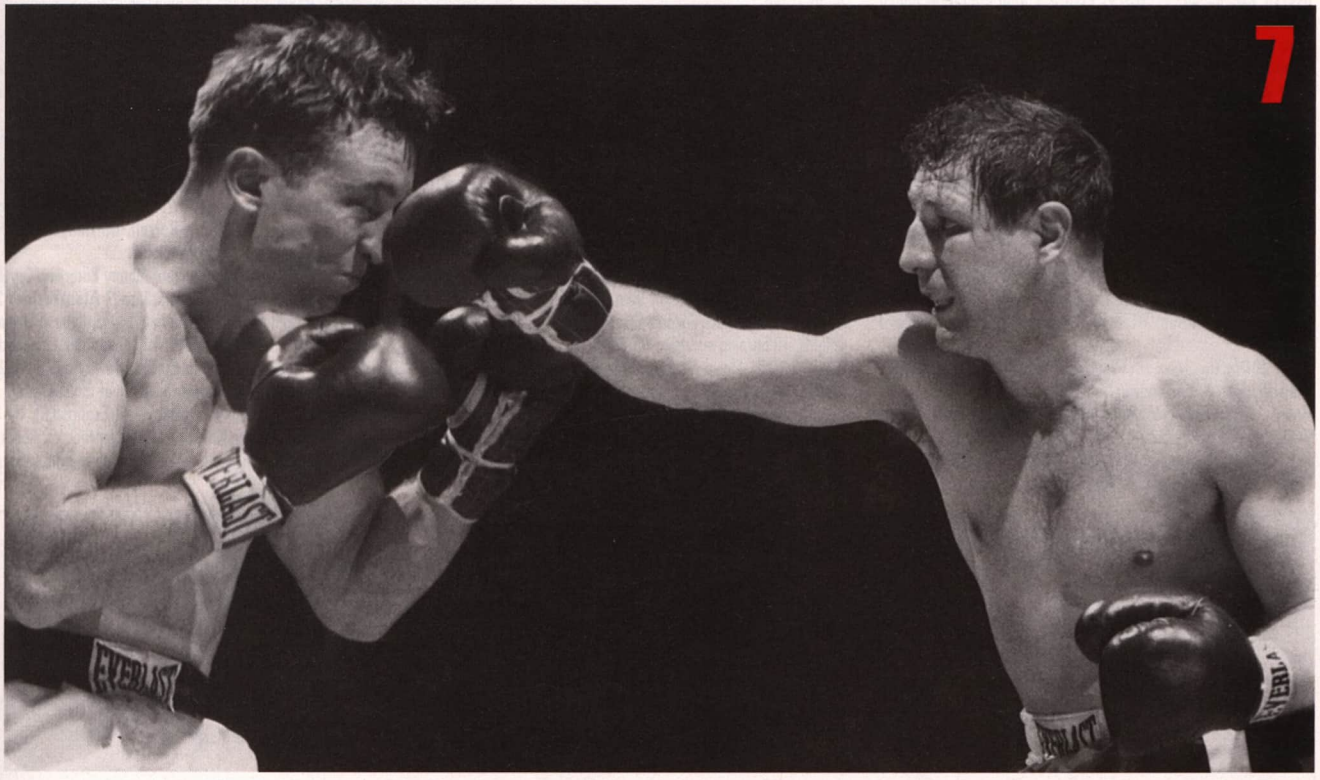
5. REVERSAL REVERSED
The December 19, 1952, bout between Graham and Joey Giardello (left) created quite a controversy. The original decision was split in Giardello's favor. But two New York State Athletic Commissioners changed one of the scorecards ringside, making Graham the winner. The case went to the New York Supreme Court, which ruled that the original verdict should not have been changed and that Giardello won.

6. GOOD FORM
Graham shows his son a few boxing pointers. The kid appears to have nice straight jab just like his old man and also knows the value of keeping his guard high.

7. LAST HURRAH
In his last significant victory, Graham used his trusty left jab to win a 10-round unanimous decision over Paddy Young. Five fights later, Graham retired following two straight decision losses to Chico Vejar.

and middleweight champ Carmen Basilio in August '52 … According to the Associated Press: "The 30-year-old New Yorker, a master boxer, had no trouble in outscoring the willing but outclassed Basilio from start to finish. Graham, a dancing speedster, pumped tantalizing left jabs into Basilio's face until old cuts on Carmen's eyebrows oozed blood. Basilio's face was crimson from Graham's right hand punches and straight lefts" … Traveled to Havana, Cuba, for a rematch with Gavilan in October '52, losing a unanimous 15-round decision by a wide margin … Next came his controversial second fight with Joey Giardello, which ended in a split-decision victory in Giardello's favor, but New York commissioners Robert Christenberry and C.B. Powell altered the scorecard of judge Joe Agnello at ringside, making Graham





the winner … Giardello sued, the New York Supreme Court reversed the reversal, and the original verdict for Giardello became the official result … Following a decision over Art Aragon in January '53, he fought Giardello again, winning a 12-round unanimous decision at MSG … He lost and drew in two bouts with Basilio in Syracuse, New York and then returned to New York and won a 10-round decision over Paddy Young … It was his final significant victory … He lost five of his next six fights and retired following consecutive losses to Chico Vejar in '55 … How good was he in his prime? Well, in 126 pro bouts he was never knocked down, but perhaps legendary boxing writer A. J. Liebling said it best when he wrote: "[Graham] was as good as a fighter can be without being a hell of a fighter."

The RING

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PERFECT EXECUTION

by Bernard Hopkins

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

THE SPEEDBAG

Getting The Rhythm

Photos by Ed Mulholland. All photos taken at the Joe Hand Boxing Gym in Philadelphia, PA.

You'll see a speedbag in every serious boxing gym there is. If you walk into a gym and there isn't a speedbag hanging on the wall, it's not a boxing gym. Maybe people work out there, but it ain't a boxing gym because the speedbag has been in boxing a hundred years. Fighters have been using the speedbag forever, and there are good reasons for it.

Working the speedbag gives you rhythm, which you need in boxing. You have to be able to do things with rhythm in the ring, to move, to punch, and to throw combinations. Fighters who don't have any rhythm look clumsy in the ring and uncoordinated because they are. You have to get that rhythm in your body and in your fists, and you'll get it keeping that speedbag going.

It gives you hand-eye coordination too. You've got to be able to react in the ring without thinking about it and train your fists and body to do things they aren't used to doing. Keeping that speedbag moving for three minutes will do that. Your eyes and your brain and your fists have to be working on the same page. Your legs too. The speedbag works those too, and we'll get to that.

Also, keeping that speedbag going for three minutes builds endurance in your arms and shoulders. Keeping your hands up all the time is hard to do unless you do it every day in the gym, and you can't hit the speedbag without keeping your hands up. Mastering the bag and making it work for you takes a while, but, like everything else you do in the gym, it pays off in the ring.

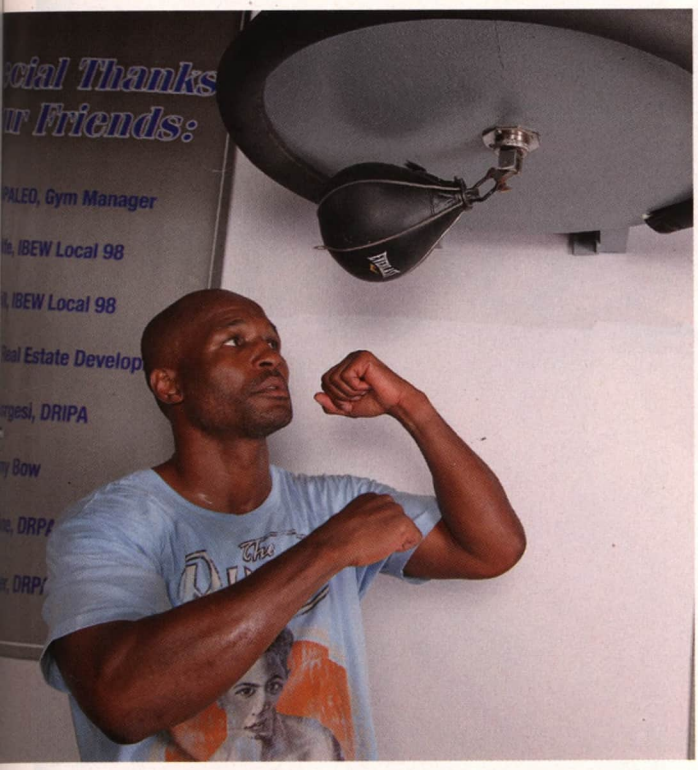
BERNARD HOPKINS is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

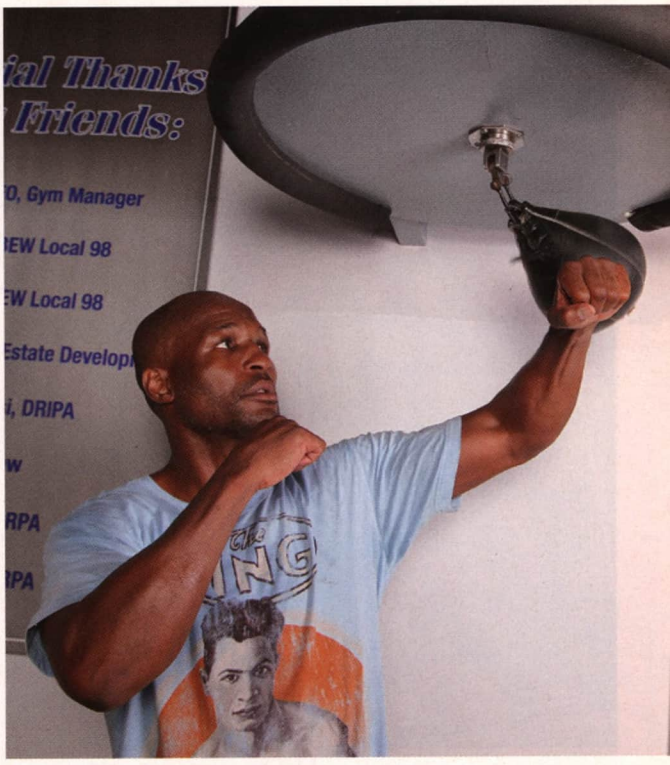
HIT WITH THE SIDE OF YOUR FIST, NOT YOUR KNUCKLES

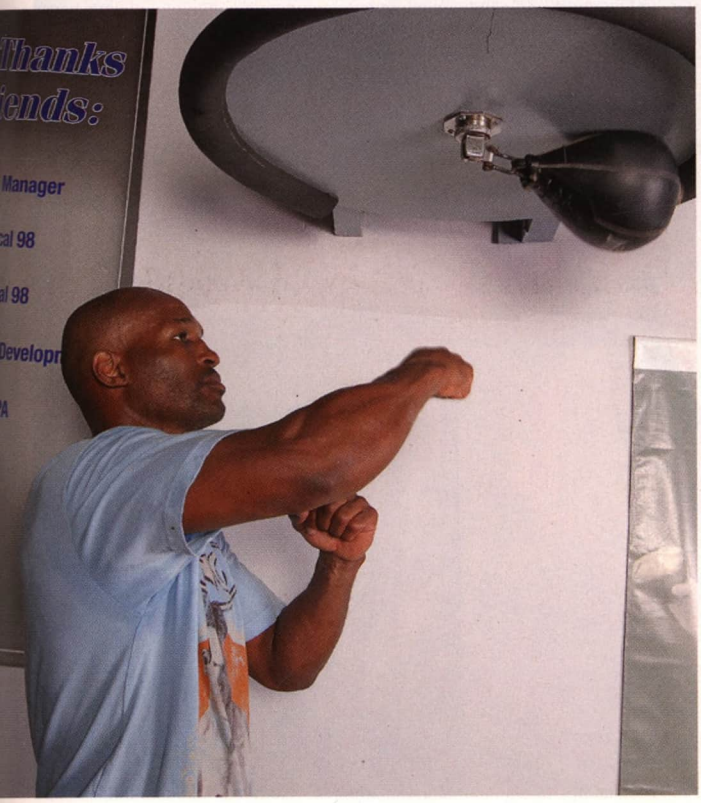
This is the only time you're not trying to land a blow with the knuckles across the front of your fist. You're not "punching" the speedbag; you're hitting it with the side of your fist, the way I am here. It'll feel strange at first, but the purpose of the speedbag is not to teach you how to punch. The other bags do that. This is for speed, hand-eye coordination, and rhythm.

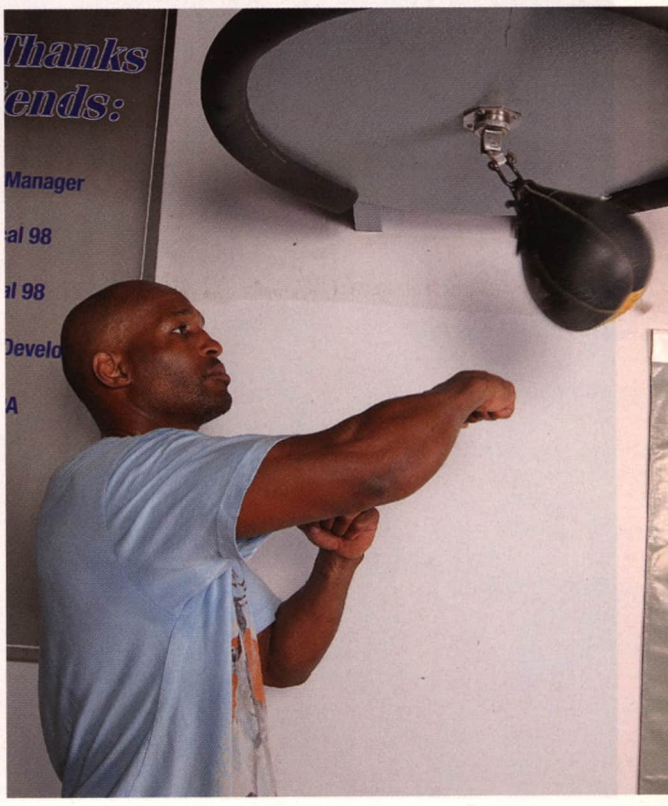
TWO HITS PER HAND

Don't start out trying to hit the speedbag real fast with both hands the way you've seen experienced guys do it. Take it slow. Two hits with the right hand, then two hits with the left. Two hits with the right, two hits with the left. The first hit sends the bag up to the platform, the second hit lands as it swings back. Two hits with the right, two hits with the left. Nice and slow. That's how you learn. When you get more experienced, you can change up the repetitions and the pace to make it faster, but, in the beginning, it's slow. Two hits with the right, two hits with the left.



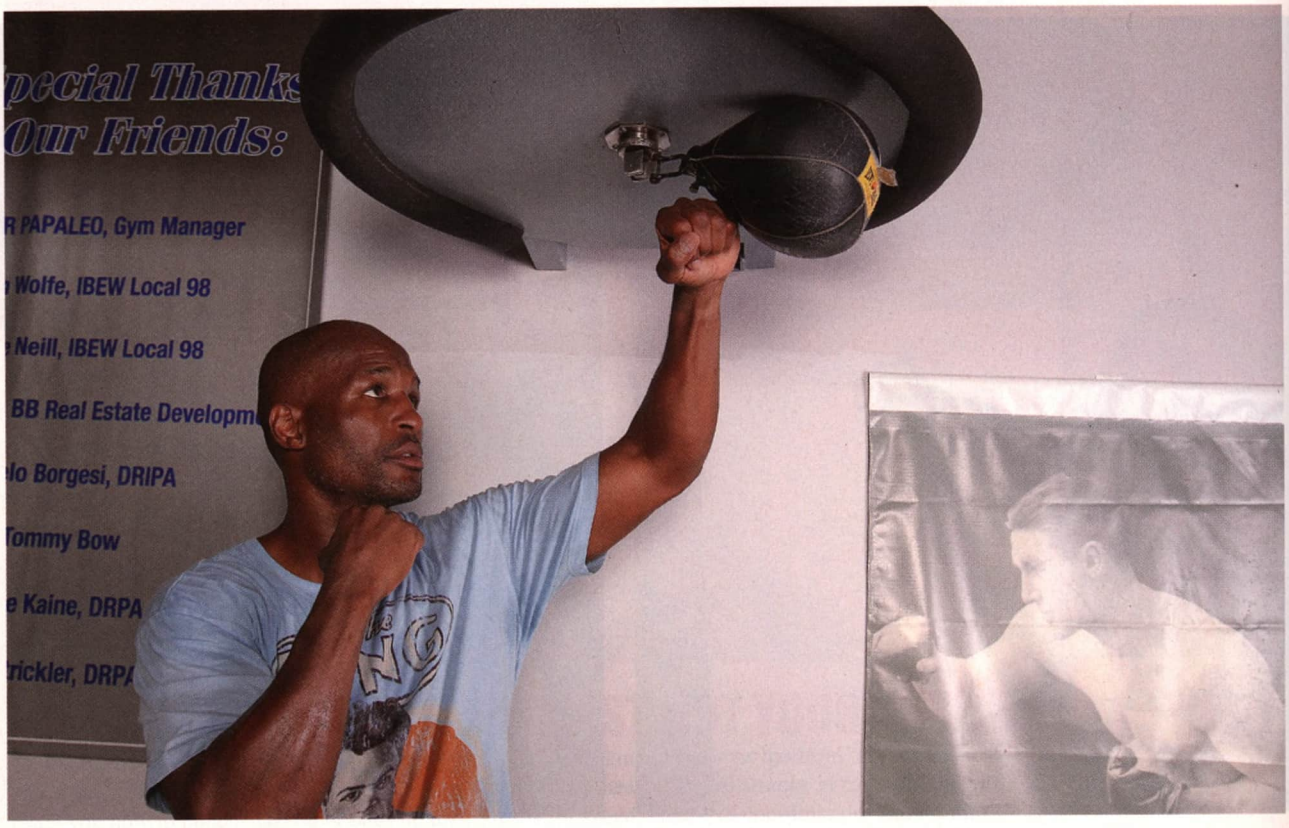






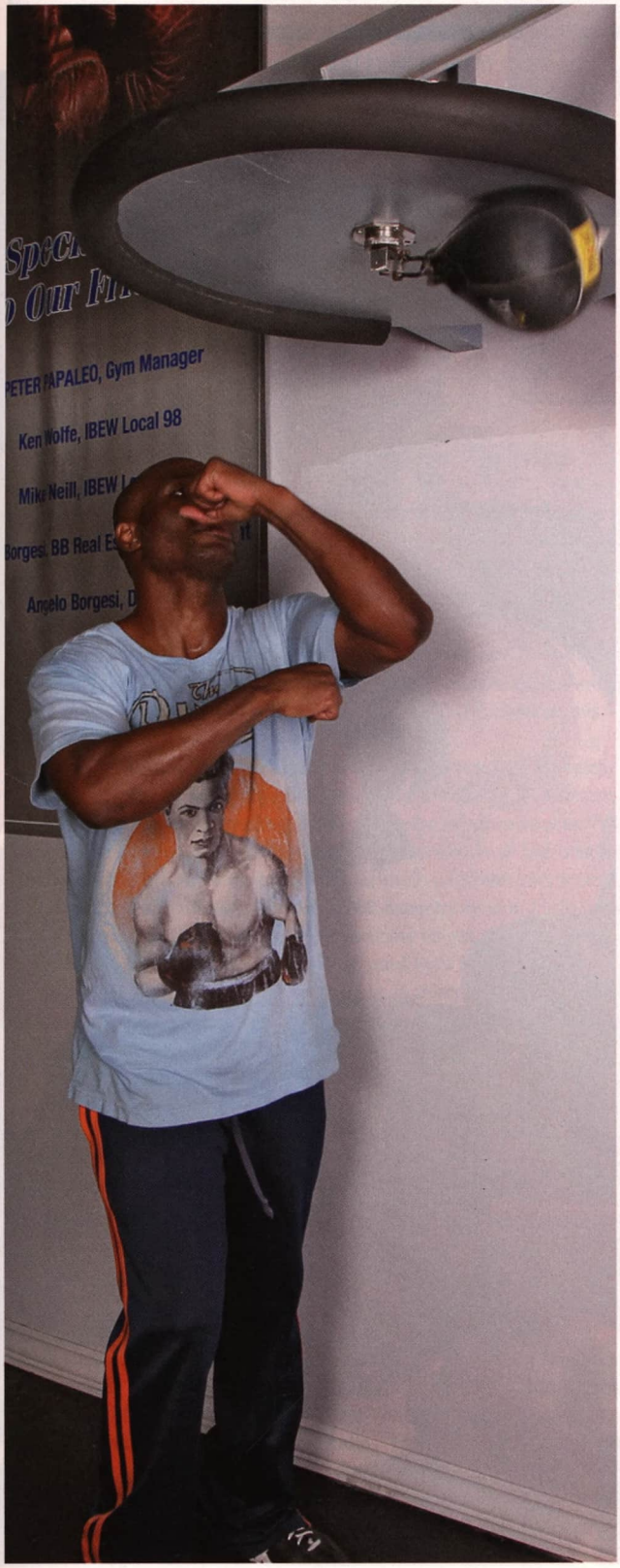
THE WRONG WAY: HIT THE TOP OF THE BAG

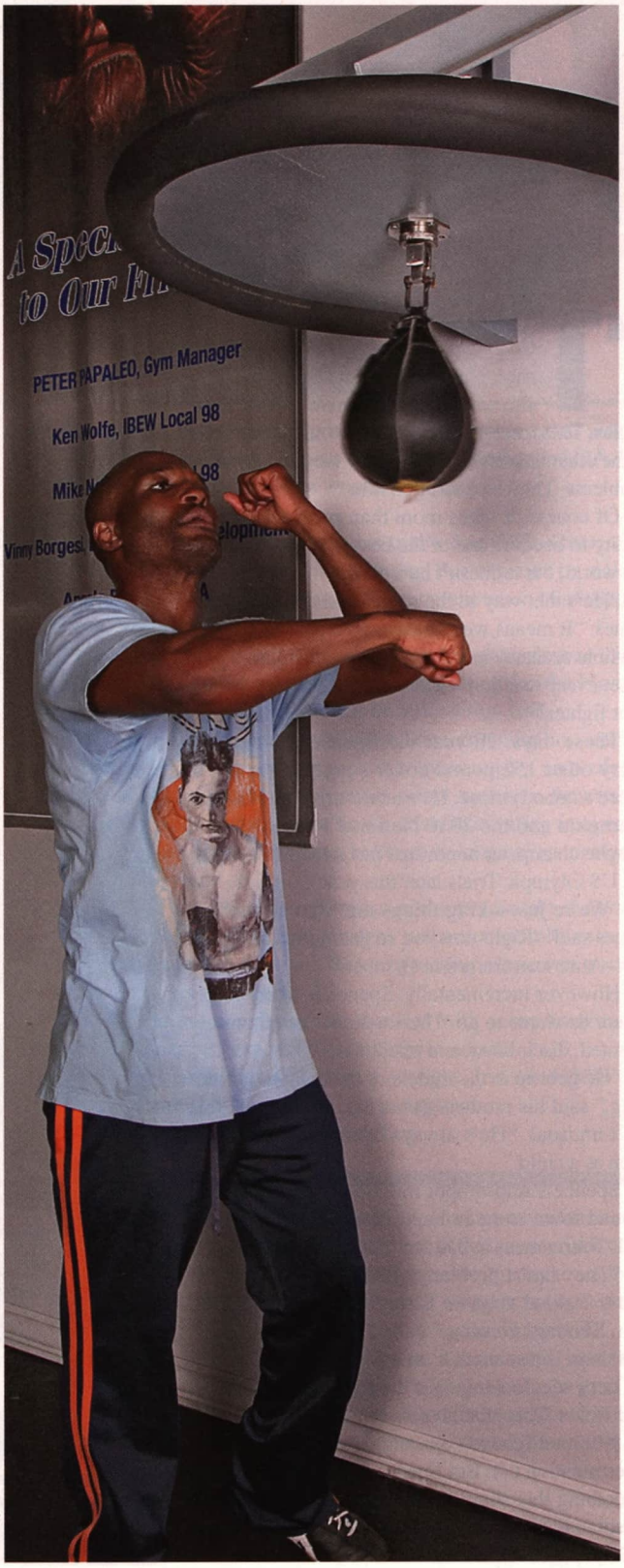
You always want to hit the fat part of the bag. Some guys hit it like this because they're trying to hit the speedbag too hard or because they're frustrated or not concentrating. Your job is to keep that speedbag moving, and, when you hit it here, you stop it dead. Aim for the fat part and keep that bag singing. Every once in a while, you can let a big punch go, but it should only be at the end of the round. You want to keep that bag and your hands moving without stopping for as much of the three-minute round as you can. When you hit it too hard or hit it badly like this, you have to start it going again.



DON'T STAND IN ONE SPOT

Once you get going on the speedbag, you'll notice that your legs will start moving almost in time with the bag striking the platform, almost like you're walking in place. Go with it. Get those legs moving. And don't just stand in one place while you're making that bag sing. Circle around it. Move to the right and back to the left again and back to the right while keeping that bag moving. That makes it harder, which means it takes more concentration and effort, which is what you want.





AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

By Michael Rivest

COMING EVENTS

World Series of Boxing Post-Season Schedule

Team Semifinals: April 1-2, 15-16 (Location TBD)

Team Finals: May 6-7 (Macau, China)

Individual Championships: May 27-28 (Macau, China)

Olympic Hopeful Errol Spence:

Taking It One Step At A Time

"The voice of reason." That's what Shante Courtney, longtime next-door neighbor, used to call young Errol "EJ" Spence as she watched him grow up in their Dallas, Texas, neighborhood. "He would always talk to the other kids and tell them how they should solve problems. They looked up to him."

Of course, it takes more than problem-solving ability to become one of the best amateur boxers in the world, but it doesn't hurt either.

"He's that way in the ring," said coach Derrick James. "It means we can have an answer for every possible scenario in a fight. Every punch has a purpose, every reaction—a reason. He's a very intelligent fighter."

These days, 20-year-old Spence has become every other 152-pound boxer's problem to solve. There's nobody close. He's a two-time US National champion and the 2010 National Police Athletic League champ, an honor that has won him a trip to the US Olympic Trials later this year.

"We're just taking things one step at a time," James said. "Right now, we're getting ready for the Pan -American Games in October."

However incrementally, Spence is likely to get where he wants to go. The southpaw is immensely talented, disciplined, and relentless.

"He gets up in the middle of the night to go running," said his mother, Debra Spence. For EJ, this isn't unusual. "He's always been so competitive, even as a child."

Spence's impromptu middle-of-the-night runs around town came in handy at the 2010 National PAL Tournament in San Antonio last October.

"They had a problem with the brackets, so we had to fight at noon on Saturday and again at 1:00 a.m. Sunday morning," James said. "But, for EJ, 1:00 a.m. is just another time for a workout."

Let's see, looking over the Rivest's Great Amateur Boxer Checklist, there's immense natural ability (√), intelligence (√), competitiveness (√), and determination (√). But Spence has one other thing, something that should be checked on every young person's list of advantages, boxer or not, but sadly isn't: supportive parents.

WORKING HARD Spence tattoos the speedbag

GROWING PAINS

PHOTO COURTESY OF WSB

AMATEUR ACTION Tony Mack catches Dorian Anthony with a left hook in WSB match

As the World Series of Boxing (WSB) winds up its first season and looks forward to team and individual championships in Macau, China, in May, is it too soon to assess how things are going for the International Boxing Association (AIBA) initiative?

We wrote a lot of things about WSB in this space a few issues ago (January 2011), all of them hopeful. In fact, we said WSB promises to save amateur boxing, a sport that for a variety of reasons has lost the excitement that kept even casual fans glued to their TVs in the 1976 Olympics. Today, those same fans wouldn't even know there was a team at the 2008 Beijing Games.

While it's too early for an in-depth analysis of the first year, a few thoughts are in order.

First, if you've seen WSB on the Versus network, you already know, with apologies to B.B. King, that the thrill is back. Some of the best amateur boxers in the world are fighting unfettered by a clunky computerized scoring system that, while eliminating concerns of scoring corruption, also eliminated real boxing.

WSB uses the 10-point-must system. And since they box without headgear, which nobody ever proved was safer, the sport is TV-friendly again, hence Versus' interest. We can see what the athletes look like. Casual fans who marveled at the handsome Sugar Ray Leonard are coming back to ogle Sijuola Shabazz and Javonta Charles.

"I've waited 30 years for something like this," said former WBA lightweight titleholder Sean O'Grady, who announces WSB-America bouts along with Allen Massengale. "Believe me, I looked at this lots of different ways, and there are no negatives."

O'Grady is correct, but there are bugs to work out, especially in the WSB-Americas. Unlike the Asian and European Conferences, where attendance is reaching 3,000 per event in some locales, WSB-Americas has struggled, recently changing venues in all but one franchise city. The L.A. Matadors switched their competitions from the 7,100-seat Nokia Center to the 1,200-capacity Avalon Hollywood.

It's going to take a while for Americans to get the message.

"We moved quickly in America," said Ivan Khodabakhsh, WSB CEO. "We didn't have time to market it there as we would have liked. But we were already committed in Asia and Europe and needed to go with or without WSB-Americas, and we chose 'with'."

That haste, which amounted to only an eight-month start-up, was costly. State Commissions overseeing some WSB-America franchises have dug in their heels: "If you're getting paid and you're fighting without headgear, you're a pro and will get licensed that way," said George Dodd, California State Athletic Commissioner. AIBA, of course, still grants WSB athletes amateur status.

Like we said, there are bugs.

Other than Mexico City, Memphis is the one WSB-Americas franchise that doesn't require pro licensing. But in order to make that happen, the Memphis Force holds its competitions in Mississippi. WSB-Americas has had to jump some hoops.

The Florida State Athletic Commission has been hardest on the WSB, eventually denying an event permit application for the Miami Gallos' scheduled events, citing a lack of commission staff.

These issues just scratch the surface. State commissions' insistence on licensing the athletes as pros also means relying on professional referees and judges, which raises safety concerns. Amateur referees are trained to emphasize boxer safety first, calling frequent standing-eight counts and stopping bouts early, long before professional referees would do so.

There's also this little incendiary issue: the five weight division winners of WSB World Championships will automatically earn a spot on their country's Olympic Teams, bypassing winners of traditional qualifying tournaments.

Needless to say, this doesn't sit too well with some American athletes who may just express their feelings in court.

Despite the problems, O'Grady is so right. For what WSB is bringing to amateur boxing, there are no negatives.

But there are bugs, some pretty big bugs.

Errol Sr. is intensely involved in his son's career while remaining respectfully unobtrusive about it. Anyone who's ever been to a neighborhood Little League game knows how dads typically fail at that paradoxical challenge.

"He comes to all of my workouts, six days a week," said Spence, while his mother waits patiently at home with little sister, Kaila. "He drives a FedEx truck all night, sleeps a few hours, then comes with me to the gym."

Doesn't that feel like pressure? "No, not at all," Spence said. "Not at all," as though saying it once just wouldn't do. Don't you need your space? "No, honestly, if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be good. I'm sure of it. He's there with me all the time, and it's what I want."

"They have a special relationship," James said. "I don't think his dad has ever missed a day in the gym, but he never interferes either." The division of labor is clear: "I'm the coach; he's the father."

But what if EJ came home one day and said he no longer wanted to …

"That's fine," said his father.

There was no need for him to wait to hear the word "box" at the end of the question. You could tell he'd already answered it many times in his head. "His mom and I would never want him to do something he didn't want for himself."

But he does want it for himself, more than anything. So the beat goes on—in the gym and on midnight runs through the streets of Dallas.

Next signpost up ahead: "London: 12 months." ■

Michael Rivest can be reached at mrivest12@gmail.com.

THE SWEETER SCIENCE

By Chris Richards

BOX OFFICE CHAMP
Holm has built a large fan base in her hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

PHOTO BY STEVE SNOWDEN/GETTY IMAGES

The Homegirl And The Road Warrior

Socrates said that all knowledge begins with the words "I don't know." The first step toward learning is the admission of ignorance. The best thing American boxing fans can do when they start reading about women's boxing is to imagine that everyone is saying "I don't know" as they whisper it quietly to themselves. There is no need to post it online or take out billboard space along the interstate. A private admission is enough. Everything else is easier once that is out of the way.

One name newcomers to women's boxing might already know is Holly Holm. The athletic Albuquerque native has a background in multiple sports (including soccer, gymnastics, swimming, and diving) and took up aerobics to stay in shape. Her aerobics instructor, Mike Winklejohn, also taught kickboxing. Holm decided to give it a try. Her try led to a brief amateur kickboxing career, culminating in a national championship.

Holm made her professional boxing debut, with Winklejohn as her trainer, in January of 2001 and fought as a professional kickboxer later that same year. By the time this column has gone to print, she will have made her professional MMA debut.

There's a reason for the Albuquerque, New Mexico, native's professional success, and it isn't just that she is arguably the best female fighter in the United States. Her partnership with Albuquerque promoter Fresquez Productions has helped her considerably. Although Fresquez lists 11 fighters on their web page, Holm (the only fighter to have her own link) is the promotion's biggest star. They've made a clear investment in building a steady hometown audience for Holm. All but seven of her 33 fights have been in Albuquerque, and only three of those seven have required her fans to drive across the state line.

The bottom line is that "The Preacher's Daughter" puts butts in the seats. She's won seven alphabet titles across three weight divisions (140 to 154 pounds) while putting together a record of 29-1-3 (9). Her victims include names like Terri Blair, Christy Martin, Jane Couch, Chevelle Hallback, Ann Saccurato, and Myriam Lamare.

There's a reason that Fresquez can call Albuquerque "the women's boxing capital of the world" with a straight face. Whether or not the claim is true, Holm's local drawing power makes taking a slot on her undercard a sound business decision.

If Holm fell into combat sports by happenstance, Canadian featherweight Jeannine Garside leapt into boxing by design. Her

THE RETURN OF THE "COALMINER'S DAUGHTER"

Jeannine Garside knew she wanted to fight after watching a March 1996 pay-per-view preliminary. Her inspiration was the bloody six-round slugfest between Christy Martin of West Virginia and Deirdre Gogarty of Ireland. Martin and Gogarty completely upstaged Mike Tyson's rematch with Frank Bruno and proved that women could produce a great fight.

Jim Martin had once planned to have Christy Salter's ribs cracked to discourage her from professional boxing. Later, with the faith of the convert, he had refused to put his male fighters on local promoters' cards unless they made room for Christy. Together they had pursued a major promoter, landing her a contract with Don King. Their personal lives entwined with their careers and they became man and wife. Ultimately, Christy Martin became the face of women's boxing and the family's sole source of income. In November of 2010, Martin was allegedly shot and stabbed by her husband/manager/trainer in their Apopka, Florida, home. The police who arrested Jim were too late to stop him from stabbing himself. The press seized the story, and it was soon alleged that Jim Martin tried to kill Christy because she was leaving him for a woman.

As we went to press, the 42-year-old Christy Martin was training in Las Vegas for her March 12 rematch with Dakota Stone. In their first fight, Martin unleashed her trademark nonstop attack for the first six rounds, then faded as Stone rallied. A broken hand suffered late in the fight kept Martin on the defensive for most of the 10th and final round. The judges rewarded Martin's grit and aggression with a majority decision win and yet another title belt.

Drama outside the ring has drawn attention to the rematch. Martin, 49-5-3 (31), says she wants to retire with 50 wins. Whatever happens inside the ropes, her return to the ring is a victory over her attacker.

PHOTO BY HENRY S. DZIEKAN III/GETTY IMAGES

SHE'S BACK! Martin speaks at a New York City press conference that announced her rematch with Dakota Stone.

amateur career includes British Columbia titles in 1998 and 1999, British Columbia Boxer of the Year in '98, and a Canadian national championship in 1999. Success in international competition followed, but, in 2000, Garside's courage threatened to ruin her future pro career before it began. She tore the ACL playing touch football, and the injury required reconstructive surgery. The 2000 Canadian nationals were not an option.

The next year was a lot better. Garside returned to the ring to win the 2001 Canadian national championships, and her amateur career was back on track. The only evidence of an injury, which has ended some athletes' careers, was a leg brace to protect the reconstructed knee. The hard-hitting southpaw's amateur record stood at 40-5 prior to turning pro, including four Canadian national titles.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

CANADA'S FINEST Garside biggest win came when she traveled to Germany and won a decision over previously undefeated Ina Menzer.

Fighting out the Border City Boxing Club (where she is also a coach) in Windsor, Ontario, and trained by former fighters Margaret Sidoroff and Josh Canty, Garside made her pro debut in 2004. Her 10-4-1 (3) record looks lean at first glance. Her accomplishments, however, outshine the numbers. In her 15 fights, she has fought an astounding eight title fights from super bantamweight to lightweight and back again. All three of her losses were on the road, and two of those losses were controversial decisions in Asia and Europe. The 32-year-old Garside fought twice in 2010, stopping fellow Canadian puncher "Lethal" Lindsay Garbatt and dominating German star Ina Menzer so completely that she won a wide, unanimous decision in Stuttgart's Porsche Arena.

One is a road warrior, the other a hometown star. Holm is a boxer, Garside a puncher. Holm fell into boxing after trying kickboxing; Garside knew she wanted to box. Both are outstanding fighters who have not shied away from tough opposition. If pay-per-view fights that are high on hype and short on fight disappoint you, you might want to brave the Internet to watch something different. Who knows? The search for the next great American fighter just might end in Albuquerque. ■

By Gavin Evans

Super Middleweight George Groves

Super middleweight George Groves is a crowd-pleasing Commonwealth champion, unbeaten, and one of the brightest hopes on Britain's booming professional boxing scene. But whenever his name is mentioned, it is tagged to that of an even more illustrious prospect, former Olympic gold medalist and current British champion, James DeGale.

If anything, it's the 25-year-old DeGale who makes more of an issue about his rivalry with his one-time amateur clubmate, proclaiming from the rooftops his hatred of the charismatic 23-year-old he insists on calling "the ugly kid," "the ugly ginger kid," or just plain "ugly," while insisting he will prevail within four rounds.

It all goes back five years to when an 18-year-old Groves, having his first tournament as a senior, outpointed DeGale, who was already an established amateur international. What made it worse for the 20-year-old "Chunky" was that Groves, who had been his understudy at the Dale Youth Club, went on to win the ABA (national amateur) title.

DeGale claims Groves has been eating out on a robbery. Groves sees it differently.

"I wasn't even fresh because it was my second fight of the night, but I knew I could beat him," said Groves. "He moans because he's like that, but all he did was flick and slap. I most certainly won that fight."

In any event, there is now a possibility that they will settle their differences in April in a British and Commonwealth title unification bout. The only potential hiccup is that Groves' promoter, Hayemaker, won the purse bid (bidding $640,000, which was $120,000 more than Frank Warren), and let's just say it will be a surprise to some within the UK game if Warren allowed one of his prime assets to fight on a rival's promotional card.

But what might give the DeGale camp confidence is a bit of reflection on Groves' wobbly performance in his previous British fight against Scotland's previously undefeated Kenny Anderson. Groves pulled off a dramatic sixth-round stoppage, but only after being dropped in the second and taking too many punches.

"Look," said Groves, "Anderson's a good fighter—he was a Commonwealth Games gold medalist—but part of my problem was that I was training for a fight two weeks earlier that was canceled, so I peaked too soon and was tired. I followed the game plan for two rounds, and then I got buzzed and I tried to punch my way out of it. But I showed my fighting spirit when I came back to stop him. Since then, people have been saying I'm chinny, but that doesn't bother me."

Groves said he's been working hard with trainer Adam Booth on "correcting amateurish flaws" with his balance when throwing punches. He also absorbs plenty from being around his illustrious stablemate, David Haye.

"David's example is extremely valuable," said Groves. "I watch closely how he deals with the pressure from the media, and, technically, I pick up a lot from him. He's very heavy-handed and yet very relaxed. As an amateur, I was all about power and aggression. Now, I'm more calm, and, despite what you saw against Anderson, my defense is improving all the time."

Groves had a relatively brief but high-achieving amateur career, ending up with a 66-10 (40) tally, which included representing England 25 times as a junior, winning a silver medal in the Junior Olympics and bronze in the European Juniors.

His nemesis as a junior was Travis Dickinson (now 10-0 as a professional and recent winner of the light-heavyweight Prizefighter tournament). "The first time he shaded a very close fight, and the second time, in the junior ABA finals, I traded with him, got dropped, and, when I got up, the referee stopped it," recalled Groves. "He's been getting publicity now as the man who beat Groves as an amateur, just like DeGale says I've been doing with him. But good luck to him; he's a top prospect."

As a senior, Groves twice won ABA titles and represented England several times, but he usually played second fiddle to DeGale. Frustrated at not being picked for the Beijing Olympics, he turned professional in November 2008, at the age of 20, having his debut on the Haye-Monte Barrett fight in London, where he won every round of a six-rounder against Lithuania's Kirilas Psonko.

In his third fight, he came to the attention of the British boxing public when he stopped veteran Paul Samuels in the first, and, from then on, he was put on the fast track. He challenged Commonwealth champion Charles Adamu in his ninth fight, dropping the hard-headed Ghanaian three times before stopping him in the sixth.

These fights were all televised in the UK, which helped establish his reputation for explosive speed and chilling punching power. He also developed a media-friendly persona, later enhanced by a candid weekly blog he wrote for *Boxing News*.

Groves made his US debut on the undercard of the Juan Manuel Marqez-Juan Diaz rematch at the Mandalay Bay on July 31, 2010, stopping Alberto Contreras in six. At the time of this writing, he was recovering from a perforated eardrum while preparing for his second US outing.

PRO RECORD

2008		
Nov. 15	Kirilas Psonko, London, UK	W 6
2009		
Feb. 1	Romaric Hignard, London	KO 3
March 28	Paul Samuels, Liverpool, UK	KO 1
April 25	Sandor Polgar, Belfast, N. Ireland	KO 1
Oct. 4	Martin Kukulis, London	KO 5
Oct. 16	Tadas Jonkus, Tyne and Wear, UK	KO 4
Nov. 7	Kanstantsin Makhankou, Nuremberg, Germany	W 8
2010		
Jan. 22	Grigor Sarohanian, Brentwood, UK	KO 3
April 3	Charles Adamu, Manchester, UK	KO 6
July 31	Alfredo Contreas, Las Vegas, NV	KO 6
Nov. 13	Kenny Anderson, Manchester	KO 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
11	11	0	0	9

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Groves' priorities include getting married (he's been with his fiancée, Sophie, for several years), winning the European title, and then his first world title at super-middle. It seems likely that as he fills out he will eventually have to move up in weight.

"I'm 6' tall and not naturally skinny, and I can put on weight easily," he said. "Even when I'm in training, I walk around at 178 pounds. In the past, I've left it too late and have felt weak in the ring, but Adam is a nutritionist, and I'm watching what I eat very carefully."

For now, his mind is set on an April date with another boxer with the habit of packing on the pounds between fights. Groves said there would be no valid excuse for DeGale's people to back out of the fight "given all the noise he's made about wanting it."

Asked how he feels about being called the "ugly ginger kid," Groves shrugs his shoulders dismissively.

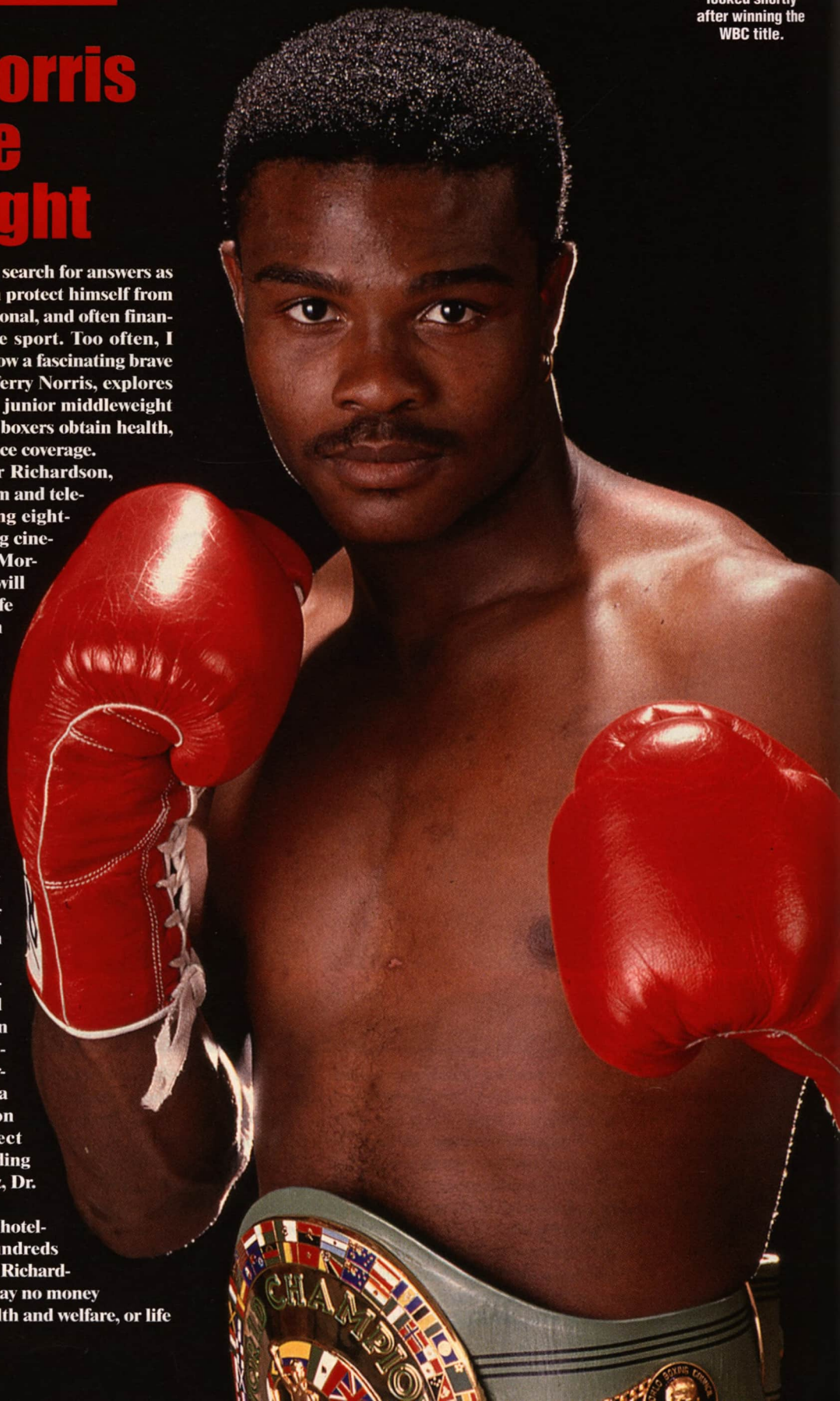
"DeGale can call me names and go on about how he hates me, but I won't resort to that. I don't have his face on my dartboard, but let's just say I'm not going to invite him to my wedding either. I don't like the guy. It's a genuine rivalry."

He adds that he can't see any way DeGale can beat him.

"He looked good winning the British title against Paul Smith, but Smith wasn't world-class. I've got quick hands, and I've never had any problems landing my punches. I'll land plenty on DeGale and take him way out of his comfort zone. I'm not afraid of taking one or two to land one because I hit harder than him. I believe I will stop him." ■

by Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Terry Norris And The Final Fight



TERRIBLE TERRY This is how Norris looked shortly after winning the WBC title.

On a regular basis, I search for answers as to how a boxer can protect himself from the physical, emotional, and often financial ravages of the sport. Too often, I come up empty handed. Now a fascinating brave documentary, featuring Terry Norris, explores the former WBC and IBF junior middleweight titleholder's quest to help boxers obtain health, life, and disability insurance coverage.

Writer-director Walter Richardson, along with experienced film and television personnel, including eight-time Emmy-award winning cinematographer Donald A. Morgan, heads the project. It will not only explore Norris' life and his uninsured health issues, but also solutions to help other boxers in similar predicaments.

"This project came about a year ago," said Richardson. "I loved boxing and saw Terry Norris on Facebook and friended him. I let him know I was a filmmaker. I believe there is a market to see a genuine human being and witness how the sport of boxing walked away from him."

The documentary, currently in production and scheduled for release in mid to late 2011, will include interviews from current and former Nevada State Athletic Commission personnel who had direct contact with Norris, including Richard Steele, Joe Cortez, Dr. Flip Homansky, and I.

"Boxers earn corporate hotel-casinos and promoters hundreds of millions of dollars," said Richardson. "Yet, those profiting pay no money toward the retirement, health and welfare, or life

insurance of the boxers who risk their very lives. This documentary asks the question: Should a professional sport operate this way in the United States?

Boxing abandoned Terry Norris. Whether we like it or not, all who work in the sport are directly or indirectly responsible.

I first had the honor of meeting Norris in 1994, while training as a Nevada ring physician. I was awe-struck. He was one of the most articulate, handsome, and fit fighters I had ever seen—perhaps the next Ray Leonard. However, by 1997, Norris demonstrated a downturn in his career with losses to Keith Mullings, Dana Rosenblatt, and finally Laurent Boudouani in 1998.

Homansky and I happened to be at the Mullings fight in Atlantic City and visited Norris in the dressing room following his ninth-round TKO loss. There was a new hoarseness to his voice, and he was lying on the dressing room table. Irrespective of a loss or win, it's unusual for a fighter to lie on a table after any fight—there is usually too much adrenalin flowing. Norris denied being hurt but was sent for a precautionary head CT that turned out to be normal.

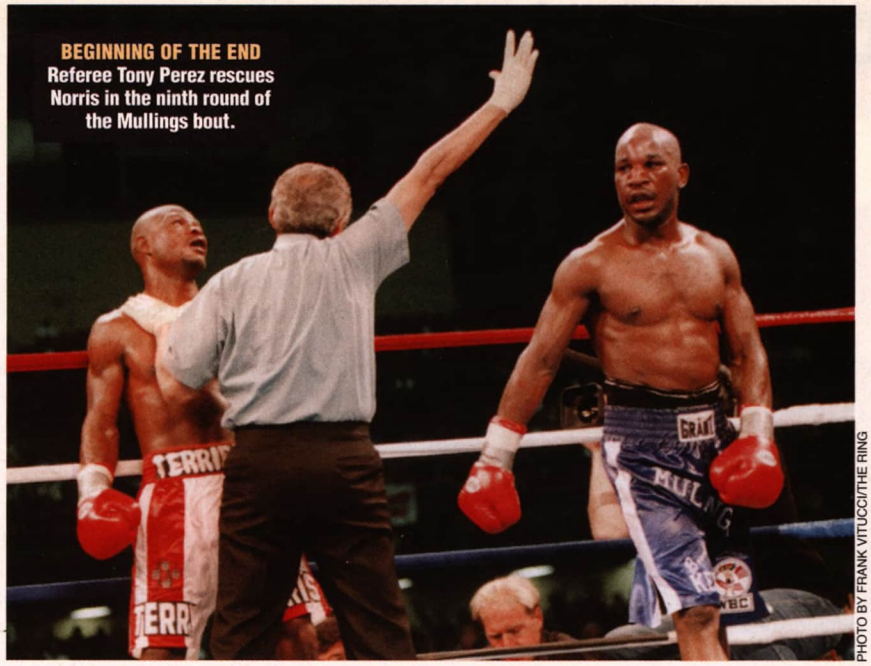
I didn't see Norris again until he attended his brother Orlin's bout against Mike Tyson at the MGM Grand Garden in 1999. I'll never forget seeing him in a black leather suit—he could have been on the cover of *GQ* that night. As he greeted me, his speech was shockingly garbled.

Horrified, I ran ringside to Flip and said, "It's too late for Terry. He should have stopped boxing sooner. Why didn't we stop him sooner?"

According to our toothless federal law, a commission cannot suspend a fighter if he does not already hold a license in their jurisdiction, and denying a fighter a license does not prevent him from traveling elsewhere. So, we had to wait for Norris to apply in Nevada.

In 2000, Norris filed a Nevada application. His licensing hearing was one of the most heartrending days I ever had in the sport. Norris' former trainer, along with documents from respected medical institutions, denied his having any health issues! Then, I presented a 1994 Showtime prefight interview with Norris speaking as clear as a bell. The commission then questioned him to hear him talk. The contrast was so startling, there was not a dry eye in the room.

Medical researchers know little more than they did years ago as to why some boxers develop Dementia Pugilistica or Parkinson's syndrome while others escape these fates. Symptoms can include slurred speech, hoarseness, rigidity, slowness, and memory loss. We know some of the risks: excessive sparring, too many headshots, knockouts and fights (professional and amateur), along with contributing factors of drugs/alcohol and a family history of dementia.



BEGINNING OF THE END
Referee Tony Perez rescues Norris in the ninth round of the Mullings bout.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI/THE RING

Norris' boxing history made him a set-up for neurological problems. He fought 295 amateur and 56 professional bouts. Although always in excellent physical condition, he would spar up to 12 rounds every other day in preparation for a fight.

Irrespective of the causes, there are simple ways to tackle the problems. Yes, comprehensive federal oversight would be a gigantic start, but that is unlikely to happen in the near future. The Boxing Promoter's Association could take a role in developing pension plans and health insurance coverage for all fighters. Promoters could take it upon themselves to establish a databank for boxer medical test results and negotiate reduced fees with laboratories, radiology facilities, and hospitals. Commissions could demand that promoters carry life insurance for athletes and oversee the gyms by preventing boxers sparring while on suspension.

Perhaps Norris has the best recommendations of all. "I would crack down on the refs and cornermen. I feel they need to have more training in the field of traumatic brain injury. Both need to care about the fighter enough to know and see when it is truly *enough*. I would order MRI's before every fight. I would set up a union that would protect fighters. The promoters, sponsors, managers, and fighters would be required to pay into the fund a percentage of whatever they made from every fight."

Norris strongly believes that boxers need to undergo more in-depth medical evaluations before and after fights—including testing the fighter's memory, gait, and motor skills. He bravely adds, "As most may have known, I fought my last two bouts with the syndrome and didn't even know. But, my dad, who was also my trainer, suspected something was wrong. I fought harder to cover it up. I'm a fighter. That's all I know how to do."

"I would feel guilty if I had made $50-million dollars off someone who had worked for me and later developed medical problems," said Richardson. "Promoters should be the first to say, 'Let's do something for the boxers.' They don't have to, but, as a human being, shouldn't they?"

When asking Norris what he wishes to accomplish through this documentary, he said, "I would like for people to know more about Parkinson's syndrome and the symptoms. I hope to create a union or association. My foundation, The Final Fight, will provide union-like benefits to amateur and pro fighters. Also, we will be educating them about Parkinson's syndrome."

This will also be a positive film offering solutions in protecting boxers during and after their career is over. "Everyone should support humane progress for workers in the United States," said Richardson. "This project will make you ask yourself: Who works harder than boxers?"

To find out more about Norris' foundation, please visit: www.terribleterrynorris.com. ■

by Jim Bagg

Tomasz The Tank Engine

Part of the reason Jake LaMotta was such a great fighter was that he just didn't care what happened to him. He had an unhealthy level of self-loathing and felt he deserved to be hit in the head, so the threat of opponents doing precisely that in the ring didn't exactly rattle him. Jake was fearless in the truest, sickest sense, and that was a big part of why he carved out a Hall of Fame career.

The Baggolyte doesn't know if Tomasz Adamek will prove to be a great fighter, but the man known as "Goral" (which sounds like a monster from some sort of horror/porn fusion flick) is at least a very good fighter. And part of the reason why recently became clear: because Adamek has a little bit of that "I don't care" blood flowing through his veins. It's not the same as LaMotta, where it's based on utter disregard for his own well-being. But the nonchalance is definitely there, as evidenced by the fact that this crazy Pole has agreed to fight a Klitschko brother without even knowing or caring which one of these 250-pound behemoths it will be.

Would you agree to get carnal with a Kardashian without knowing in advance if it was going to be Kim or Khloe? Would a Hollywood studio sign to do a movie with a Stallone without knowing if they were getting Sylvester or Frank? Would THE RING pay money for a boxing column from a Bagg without knowing if the writer was going to be the exquisitely talented Jim or his no-talent brother Satchel?

Adamek, clearly, is a rare breed. Some heavyweights—not naming any names, but let's just say the one the Baggtastic is thinking of rhymes with Schmavid Schmaye—won't agree to fight either one of the Klitschkos, and here is Adamek, giving up about five or six inches and 30 or 35 pounds, saying it doesn't matter to him which one he faces. It's a bold statement.

And the announcement that Adamek will be fighting a Klitschko in September has set in motion a series of moderately interesting events in the heavyweight division. (By recent heavyweight standards, "moderately interesting" qualifies as a major upgrade.) Here's a look at three noteworthy heavyweight news items that have followed the Adamek-Klitschko deal:

Adamek signs for a tune-up against Kevin McBride: You gotta give Main Events credit: They know how to dig up a big white stiff. What, Jess Willard's corpse wasn't available? This is an ingenious piece of matchmaking on several levels. First, it gets Adamek some extra experience against a 6'6" opponent. Second, it gives the viewing public a chance to watch him beat up a 6'6" opponent, thus creating a low rumbling of belief that he has a chance of doing the same thing to a Klitschko. And third, Adamek vs. anyone will sell several thousand tickets in beautiful downtown Newark, so why make that "anyone" someone dangerous? If Main Events is looking for an opponent Adamek can't possibly miss with his punches, well, here comes the McBride.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

EITHER ONE WILL DO
Intrepid Adamek has agreed to fight either Wladimir or Vitali Klitschko.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

(Preemptive note to morons: That "the" before "McBride" was intentional. It's a play on "here comes the bride." Sorry if the Baggarooney is underestimating your intelligence by spelling that out, but he feels fairly confident that he has the intelligence of at least 98 percent of you humanoids pegged perfectly.)

HBO rethinks its Klitschko stance, makes push for Wladimir vs. Chisora: Hey, do you think Ross Greenburg now feels justified for his infamous line about how nobody in America can tell the Klitschkos apart on account of the fact that Adamek has deemed them interchangeable? In any case, the promise of Adamek vs. a Klitschko, combined with the fact that the Klitschko brothers have expressed their distaste for HBO due to various unflattering comments from Ross The Boss, has led HBO to suddenly bend over backward to make nice-nice. How far bent over? Sooooo far that the network expressed interest in televising Wlad vs. Derek Chisora.

Let the Baggapalooza get this straight: They won't televise Wlad vs. the number-three heavyweight in the world, Ruslan Chagaev, for the vacant RING title, but they will televise Wlad vs. Chisora?! This is just a wee bit transparent. HBO lost Manny Pacquiao (for now at least) and who knows if Floyd Mayweather will ever fight again. So, suddenly the Klitschko brothers, despite their fights being more boring than unedited single-camera footage of Larry Merchant tweezing his eyebrows, are the network's saviors. Then again, Klitschko vs. Adamek is a meaningful heavyweight fight, so you can't blame Greenburg. (Well, unless you're talking about how HBO got into this mess in the first place. With regard to that, blame Greenburg all you want.)

Vitali vs. Odlanier Solis goes to Epix: This wasn't necessarily directly linked to the Adamek-Klitschko glove triangle, but it is big news that followed the Adamek-Klitschko announcement. And it's at least indirectly related since a new pay-cable station might be lining itself up to land the big September fight. This is fun, really. Maybe not the part about fight fans shelling out extra coin every month for another channel (let's hope Epix at least has good late-night hooker/stripper/porn star documentaries). But what is fun is the part about three pay networks getting into bidding wars over the major fights and driving up the quality of the broadcasts we'll see with good, old-fashioned competition.

Chances are that Tomasz Adamek is not going to reverse the heavyweight division's downward slide, because chances are that he's going to lose to whichever Klitschko he fights. But at least temporarily, his balls-the-size-of-watermelons willingness to fight either one of those big lugs has stirred the pot a little bit. The Baggalufagus doesn't know if Adamek is more crazy than brave or more brave than crazy, but, whatever he is, he's making the sport more exciting. And when it comes to being exciting, he's a 10-1 favorite over a Klitschko … any Klitschko.

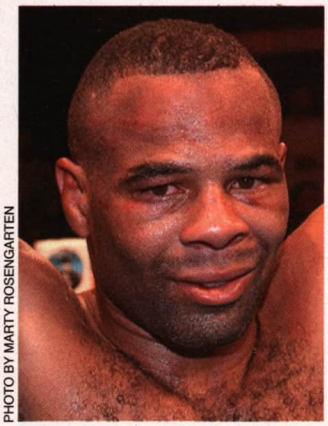


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

From One Drunken Master To Another

Boxing retirements stick about as well as a pre-worn Band-Aid on Joe Cortez' sweaty head, so the Baggaloupe will keep this tribute brief. But, just in case Emanuel Augustus really is retired like he says he is, then from one talented guy in a perpetual boozed-up stupor to another guy who moves around the ring like he's on the sauce, thank you.

If they add a "better than his record suggests" wing to the International Boxing Hall of Fame, Augustus is a first-ballot inductee. Same goes for if they add a "lost track of how many times he got screwed over" wing. From the war with Micky Ward to the double punch against Ray Oliveira and everything in between, Augustus provided about as much entertainment as any TV fighter of his era. There's more to boxing than wins and losses, and Augustus' career was a constant reminder of that.

ODE TO AUGUSTUS
Bagg shares something in common with retiring fan favorite.

AND THE STINGRAY GOES TO …

Bronx-based welterweight Allen Conyers, who has the greatest Stingray nickname since the legendary Ron "Stingray" McCarthy waltzed into our lives: "Dream Shatterer." And did he ever shatter the dreams of 20-0 prospect James De La Rosa on the Tim Bradley-Devon Alexander undercard at the Pontiac Silverdome, improving to 12-4 (9) with a shocking unanimous decision win over the inappropriately nicknamed "King."

Conyers was once a promising prospect himself, but then he lost to the likes of Delvin Rodriguez, James Kirkland, and Said Ouali, found himself on the track to a journeyman's career, and disappeared for more than two years. But in his first fight since September 2008, Conyers hurt De La Rosa in the first round, dropped him three times, and scored a 10-round decision win by three scores of 95-92.

Workers at the Silverdome are still picking up pieces of De La Rosa's shattered dreams. As for Allen Conyers, the only thing he's picking up is his Stingray certificate.

DREAM SHATTERER
Conyers (left, vs. James Kirkland) ended De La Rosa's unbeaten streak.

PHOTO BY DWIGHT MCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

THE MONTHLY MAILBAGG

Many celebrities have explained that they use Twitter so they can connect with their fans. And that happens to be precisely the reason the Baggamaniac *isn't* on Twitter. Having to answer your e-mails is about all the connection the Baggapotamus can take:

M.C. Baggz 2 Richz,

Can you please educate a brother as to why Antonio Margarito was demonized on such a national mainstream level for his involvement in the use of a banned substance in his hand wraps, while similar allegations against Felix Trinidad in his fight with Bernard Hopkins went completely under the radar by comparison? Was there a difference in the two substances used?

Sincerely,
The REAL Rick Georgi

Rick,

Phew, thank goodness this is the *real* Rick Georgi. The streets are crawling with impostors. (And while we're on the topic of naming conventions, please don't ever give the Baggenwolf a rap-related nickname ever again. The only "MC" that goes before his name stands for "marriage crusher.")

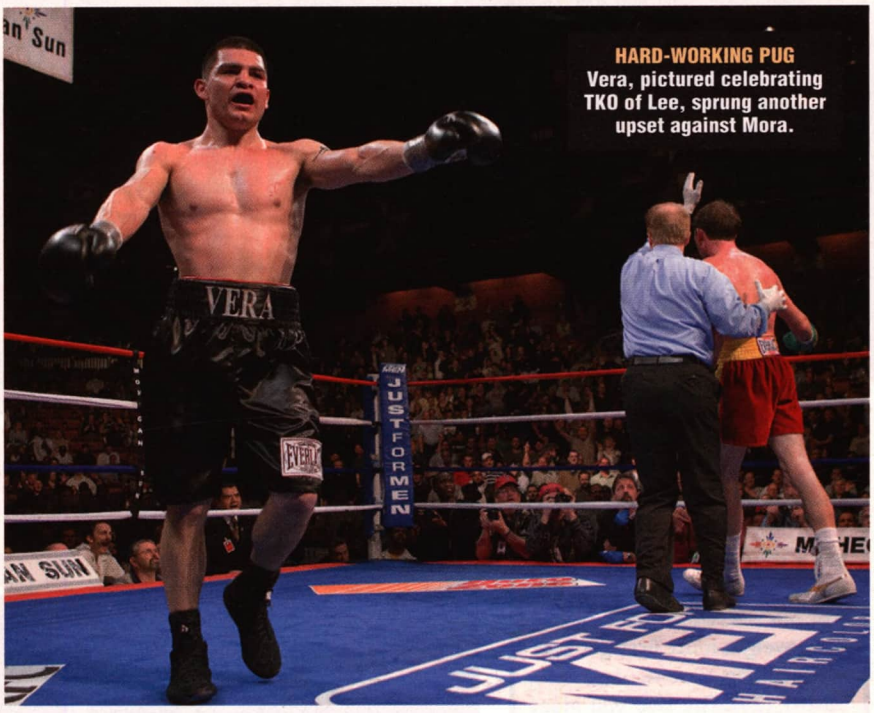
To answer your question, yes, there's a big difference between what Team Margarito did and what Team Trinidad did. Margarito's trainer actually placed plaster-based inserts in his wraps. There's not a whole lot of gray area there. Trinidad's trainer didn't insert anything into the wraps. He wrapped the hands in a questionable manner, one that is believed to be legal in Puerto Rico and some other jurisdictions, but not in New York, where the Hopkins fight took place. Yes, it seemed shady, but, in a way, that made it hard to definitively call "Tito" a cheat-o.

And for the record, what happened with Trinidad didn't fly "under the radar." It was a big deal at the time. But there were no grounds on which to revoke his license, so the controversy faded away. Margarito actually lost his license. If that doesn't tell you there was a difference in what the two fighters were caught doing, then maybe the Baggenbottom is better off trying to have an intelligent conversation with the fake Rick Georgi.

Thank You Vera Much

Fight fans just do not like Sergio Mora. It has something to do with the cocky way he carries himself, something to do with his puzzling decision to turn down a middleweight championship fight with Jermain Taylor a few years ago, and something to do with his ugly fight with Shane Mosley last August. If you ask the Baggstralian, it's not really fair. "The Latin Snake" is intelligent and well-spoken (two qualities not exactly prized in today's popular culture, hence the star power of Paris Hilton and the cast of *Jersey Shore*), he has boxing skills, and the Mosley fight was an anomaly in terms of how unpleasing it was to watch. (There's been some serious revisionist history on this front, but look down Mora's record and show the Baggmeister another fight that stunk. Some were good, some were so-so, but none were awful other than the Mosley fight.)

The point is, the Baggfridgerator wasn't planning to root as hard as the rest of the boxing world for Brian Vera to upset Mora on *Friday Night Fights* in February. But once the fight started, he did start pulling for Vera—not because he wanted Mora to lose, but because how could you not want Vera to win? Other than the fact that he's from Texas (the state that gave us Cowboys, Bushes, and Coles), there's nothing not to like about Vera.



HARD-WORKING PUG
Vera, pictured celebrating TKO of Lee, sprung another upset against Mora.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

He's such an honest, hard-working pug, and he's a guy who needs a win like this every few fights to get that next half-decent payday. You felt great for him when he got it against Andy Lee. You felt great for him when he got it against Sebastian Demers. And you felt great for him when he got it against Mora—whether you hated Mora or not.

It seems that, among the hardcore fans, anyone who appears on *The Contender* automatically has detractors and is underrated by the fight nerds until he does something to win them over. Mora will probably never do that, especially now that he's lost to Vera. He's doomed to be disrespected and somewhat underrated. But Vera should be able to escape the *Contender* stigma. He's so unlike Mora in so many ways, and, to most of the fans out there, that will take him far. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Don Stewart

FEATHER FRENZY

A busy April is in store for the featherweight division, which hasn't been this hot since Manny Pacquiao, Juan Manuel Marquez, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Erik Morales began moving north six years ago.

Top-ranked **Juan Manuel Lopez** will meet number-four **Orlando Salido** in a Showtime-televised clash April 16 in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. That bout will come eight days after 10th ranked **Hozumi Hasegawa**, 29-3 (12) defends his belt in Japan against the always entertaining **Jhonny Gonzalez**, 47-7 (41), and one day before third-ranked **Chris John**, 44-0-2 (22), makes a mandatory defense in his native Indonesia against fellow countryman **Daud Yordan**, 27-1 (21).

Promoter Top Rank is still content to allow the much-anticipated match between Lopez and number-two **Yuriorkis Gamboa** to simmer while the demand for it builds. Lopez, 30-0 (27), will try to outdo Gamboa, who survived an eighth-round knockdown to win a unanimous decision against Salido, 34-11-2 (22), last September.

LISTEN UP

Tomasz Adamek, 43-1 (28), has a shot lined up with one of the Klitschko brothers later this year, but THE RING's fourth-ranked heavyweight must first get past journeyman **Kevin McBride**, 35-8-1 (29). The two will meet April 23 at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, in a bout that will air on Integrated Sports pay-per-view ... **Evander Holyfield**, 48, continues his quixotic attempt to regain the heavyweight crown May 7, when he meets former contender **Brian Nielsen** in Denmark. Nielsen, 46, hasn't fought in nine years.

Undefeated Irishman Next For Khan

Alex Winter has been holding out hope for almost 20 years that Keanu Reeves will want to do another "Bill and Ted" movie. DJ Jazzy Jeff could probably benefit from a reunion tour with Will Smith. And so it goes for **Breidis Prescott**, whose rematch with **Amir Khan** might never materialize.

Prescott, of course, demolished Khan in 54 seconds back in September 2008. Like Reeves and Winter and Jeff and Smith, Khan and Prescott have gone in much different directions since linking up. Khan has won six straight, including a Fight of the Year candidate against **Marcos Maidana** last December and appears headed toward a megabout with **Timothy Bradley**. Meanwhile, Prescott has gone 3-2, with decision losses to **Miguel Vazquez** and **Kevin Mitchell**.

Still, there were some groans in early February when Khan came to terms with unbeaten Irishman **Paul McCloskey** for an April 16 homecoming bout in Manchester, England. Southpaw McCloskey, 22-0 (12), is ranked 10th at 140 pounds by THE RING and is popular in the United Kingdom. But many fans and observers felt Khan's April date was the perfect opportunity for his long-awaited rematch with Prescott.

The Colombian slugger wasn't even on Team Khan's radar for April 16. The top choice was eighth-ranked **Lamont Peterson**, but the two sides couldn't come to terms. Former beltholder **Junior Witter** and England's **John Murray** were also considered.

In a February interview with ESPN.com, Khan, 24-1 (17), insisted that he hasn't forgotten about the guy who placed the lone blemish on his record thus far. Khan said his plan is to fight McCloskey in April, the top-ranked Bradley in July for the vacant RING title, then meet Prescott before moving up to 147 pounds. In the meantime, he'd like to see Prescott add to his two-bout winning streak.

"The longer the fight waits, the bigger the fight will be," Khan told ESPN.com. "That's how I see it. As soon as I unify the division, the Prescott fight can happen. There are people I want to fight and beat. After I beat Bradley, there will be nobody left [at 140]. Then I will fight Prescott again and move up to 147."

So the waiting game continues for the 27-year-old Prescott, 23-2 (19). There was talk in late 2010 that a screenplay is finally being written for a third "Bill and Ted" film, a series that began in 1989 when the main characters were high school students. Will the Prescott-Khan sequel still be relevant when and if it happens, or, by then, will it be just another sorry attempt to capitalize on fan nostalgia? ■

SITTING PRETTY

Challenger McCloskey and titleholder Khan pose with co-promoter Ricky Hatton.

PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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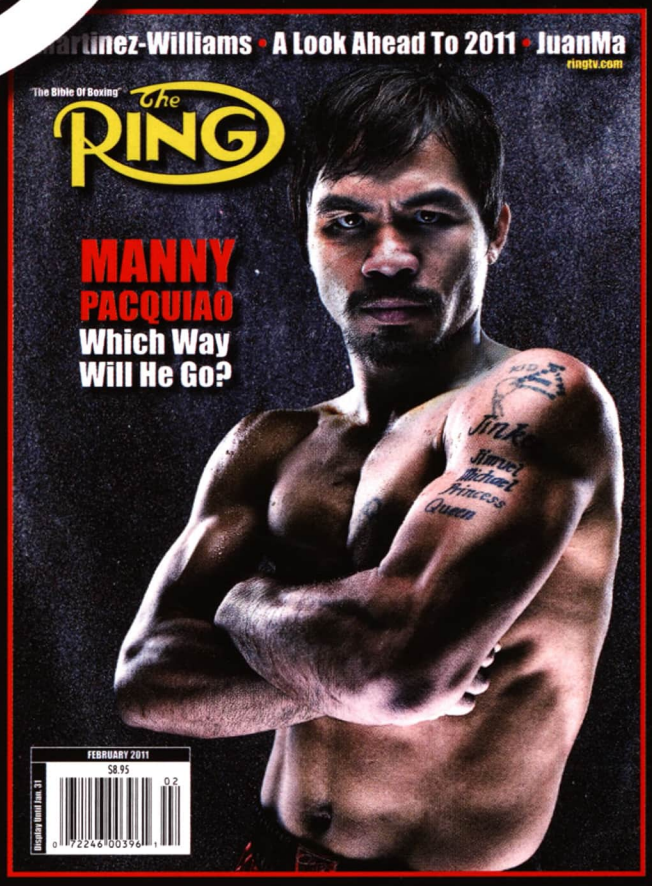

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